
Rauchamp.

BEAUCHAMPE

OR

THE KENTUCKY TRAGEDY

A SEQUEL TO CHARLEMONT

31816

By W. GILMORE SIMMS, Esq.

AUTHOR OF "THE PARTISAN"—"MELLICHAMPE"—"KATHARINE WALTON"—"THE FORAYERS"—"THE SCOUT"—"WOODCRAFT"—"GUY RIVERS," ETC.

"Maid of Lulan," said Fingal, "white-handed daughter of Grief! a cloud, marked with streaks of fire, is rolled along thy soul. Look not to that dark-robed moon: look not to those meteors of Heaven. My gleaming steel is around thee, the terror of thy foes."....

"I rose, like a stalking ghost. I pierced the side of Cormac-trunar. Nor did Forna-Bragal escape. She rolled her white bosom in blood. Why, then, daughter of heroes, didst thou wake my rage?"—Ossian. *Cath. Loda.*

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ADVERTISEMENT.

"BEAUCHAMPE; or the Kentucky Tragedy," is the sequel to the story of "Charlemont." The story supposes some little interval of time between its opening, and the close of its predecessor. The connection between the two is sufficiently intimate, though the sequel introduces us to new persons—the hero among them—who do not figure in the first publication. I do not know that anything farther need be added by way of explanation. In regard to moral and social characteristics, the preface to "Charlemont" will suffice. A few words, perhaps, in regard to the *materiel*, may not be amiss in the present connection, to prevent mistakes, and save the critic from that error, which he occasionally makes, of substituting his own point of view for that of the author—an error which usually results in a mere game of cross purposes between the parties, which is profitable to neither. The reader may find or fancy some occasional differences of fact and inference, date, place, and period, between this and other narratives relating to Beauchampe, and the famous Kentucky tragedy of which he was the unhappy hero. But, as a man of sagacity, he will naturally discard all bias derived from any previous reading, in

deference to that which is now submitted him. Ours, in the language of the quack advertisements, is the only genuine article. We alone have gone to the fountain head for our materials. We have good authority for all that is here given. We can place our hand on the record at any moment, and we defy all skepticism. Newspapers are lying things at best—they have told sundry fibs on this very subject. Pamphlets—and our melancholy history has induced several—are scarcely better as authorities;—even the dusty files of the court should make nothing against the truth of our statements where they happen to differ. At all events, the good reader may be assured that our disagreements are not substantial. They affect none of the vital truths of the narrative. We agree in all wholesome respects. Our morals are the same—our results very nearly so; and if we have made a longer story of the matter than they have done, it only proves that we had so much more to say. We need say no more by way of preparative, and we forbear saying anything by way of provocative. Fall to and welcome! The fare is solid enough, and, as for the spices and the dressing—say nothing in disparagement of these, if you would not incur the maledictions of the cook. We Anglicise in this sentence a homely proverb, which would scarcely tell so well in the original.

BEAUCHAMPE.

CHAPTER I.

THE RUINED HAMLET.

TIME does not move with the less rapidity because his progress is so insensible. His wings may be compared to those of the owl and other birds who fly by night. Their feathers are fined off to such exquisitely-delicate points, that they steal silently through the air, as swiftly as stealthily, and strike their object without alarming it. So with that "subtle thief" whom men personify as Time. He moves like the pestilence, without beat of drum, without pomp of banners, with no pageantry of state or terror, which might warn the victim to prepare his defences. He fans us to sleep as the fabled vampire, with dark wing slowly waving over our slumbers, while his sharp tooth is penetrating the vital places in our bosoms.

Five years have elapsed since the period of those melancholy events, which furnished us with the materials for our village-chronicle of "Charlemont." The reader of that legend will not require that we should remind him of its sorrowful details. Enough that we tell him that its inhabitants are all dispersed — scattered variously in remote regions — some silent in the grave — all changed; all undergoing change; and that the village itself is a ruin! The

vicissitudes of life have told in various ways upon all the parties to our former story. Some of them have been *kept* wretched; others, made so; while others again, have held a sensible progress—onward, upward—to prosperity and honorable distinction. Perhaps, we shall gather something more definite on this head from the discourse of the two travellers, whom we behold alighting from their horses, and seating themselves upon one of the hills by which the valley of Charlemont is overlooked.

Here, on this very spot, more than five years before, two other travellers had paused to survey the natural beauties of the village, and to feast their eyes upon the rural aspect of its innocent society. At that period, it was comparatively innocent. There was peace within its borders, and Plenty sat beside its winter fires, fully solaced by Content. But the gaze of those two travellers brought blight upon several of its sweetest homes. One of the two, a good old man, went on his way, dreaming with delight upon the simple beauties and felicities of the little hamlet. He little dreamed that the other, his favorite nephew, had surveyed it with far less loving, yet more rapacious eyes—that he would steal back, alone, in disguise, and penetrate the little sanctuary of peace, hiding among its flowers, as a serpent, and leaving taint in the place of innocence. The reptile's mission was successful. The home was polluted, the hope destroyed, and the little village was no longer the abode of peace or happiness. Now we see that it is in ruins—that it is deserted of its people—that its old familiar homes are solitary, and sinking fast into decay. We may not say that all this melancholy change was the fruit of this serpent's visit, but who shall say that it was not? Who shall measure the suffering and loss to a little rustic hamlet from the shame and sorrow which defile and degrade one of its favorite families. The shadow upon one sweet cottage-home casts a darkening atmosphere, in some degree over all around it, and lessens the charm which was once enjoyed

by all in common, and takes from the beauty of the general landscape. Where the resources of society are drawn from natural and simple causes, we all share in the loss which proves fatal only to the single individual.

But, in place of the two former travellers, whose inauspicious gaze was thus full of mischief to the universal beauties of Charlemont, we see two very different persons. They occupy the same point of survey; they both gaze from the same eminence which erewhile unfolded the charm of a most lovely landscape. One of these strangers, as in the former instance, is a tall, finely-built, noble-looking old gentleman, whose white head declares him to be fast approaching the ordinary limits of the natural life. He was between sixty and seventy years of age, though you would arrive at this conclusion chiefly from the snowy whiteness of his hair, and the serene benevolence of his countenance, showing that the more violent passions were now wholly overcome, and not from any appearance of decrepitude. On the contrary, his bearing is that of a man still vigorous in bone and muscle. He carries himself erectly, alights promptly from his steed, with the freedom and ease of the practised hunter, and there is still, in his movement, the evidence of very considerable physical power, if not of energy. His eye is still of a bright and earnest blue; his cheeks are but little wrinkled, nowhere much seared by either suffering or time, and the ruddy hue which clothes them declare equally for health and vigor.

His companion is a young man who might be twenty-five or thereabouts. In respect to frame, size, bearing, he might be the son of the former. He is of noble figure and stature, of firm, dignified, and easy carriage, and wears a fine, frank expression of countenance. The face, though without one feature like that of the senior, is also quite a handsome one, marked with great serenity, though of a gravity which seemed to declare the presence of emotions of a nature much more serious than any of those which are

caused by thought and study. Though full of intelligence and a fine spirit, the expression is shadowed by a look of sadness approaching to melancholy. There is a fixedness and depth in his eyes—an intensity of gaze—which penetrates you with a sense of suffering and mystery; suffering which has been overcome, but which has left its traces, as the fire which has been extinguished, yet leaves the scorching proofs of its wing upon the roof and sides of the bright dwelling over which it once has swept. His mouth, in its rather close compression, confirms the story of his eyes, and the beauty of the well-cut lips is somewhat impaired by the sternness resulting from this additional evidence of trial, and vexing passions. The mystery which you see written in the young man's visage is one that invites to the study of that character, which a single glance persuades you must be worthy of examination. His movements are deliberate, his voice is low in tone, quiet, gentle, musical, yet capable of great and sonorous utterance. There is no sign of feebleness or indecision of purpose in the movements which are yet slow. On the contrary, every step which he takes is significant of strength—of powers that only wait the proper motive, or the sufficient provocation, to declare themselves with commanding, and even startling effect. As he stands awhile, after fastening the two horses in the thicket, and leaning slightly forward, gazes down intently upon the valley slope, dotted with the decaying cottages, you read in his look and action a further secret in which you conjecture a something, which links the fate of the lonely hamlet with his own fortunes, and confirms, with a deeper meaning, the sorrowful thought, and saddening memories, which loom out, darkly bright, in all the lines of his strongly-expressive countenance.

The old man is already seated upon the cliff and looking forth in silence. The young one joins him with quiet movement, and takes his seat beside him. And thus they sat together, for some time, without speaking. It would seem

as if they enjoyed a communion of thought and sympathy —that neither needed to speak of reminiscences which were cherished in equal degree by both, and that, whatever the cause of melancholy reflection, it was shared between them.

A considerable interval of time, speaking comparatively, was thus yielded up in silence, to sad if not bitter thought. At length the old man said:—

"We are here, again, William. It is the same, yet not the same. Nature is ever young. Trees, rocks, hills, valleys—these rarely change. Here, without a single companion, as of old! yet how many of our old companions are about us. I feel the former life, if not the ancient feelings. Yet what a change. And five years have done it all! What a brief period! Yet, what an eternity!"

The other did not immediately answer. When he did, he said musingly:—

"I see no sign of human life. I doubt if there be a single inhabitant left."

"Indeed, it looks as if there were none. How strange is it, that, feeling with the place as we both did, and do, we should have so entirely forborne to keep up any communication with it. We know not a syllable of the occasion of these changes. How strange that they should have been so altered! Can there have been any epidemic here? I have heard of none. The village was always healthy. The place is sweet and beautiful. The people were mostly in good circumstances, had few wants which they could not satisfy, and seemed happy enough and contented enough in these abodes. What was the sad necessity, what the vexing appetite which prompted their abandonment. Shall we descend into the valley and inquire further? It may be that we shall find some lingering occupant in some one of the farther cottages. These are evidently abandoned. What say you, William? Shall we feel our way once more along the old familiar places?"

"Ah! sir, with what reason? Shall we behold anything more grateful in a nearer approach. Here, it seems to me, we can behold enough for melancholy thought; and none other can we borrow from the associations with this place. You see yonder the ruins of my father's house. It has evidently been destroyed by fire—the work, no doubt, of some passing incendiary. Yet, among these ruins, I first drew the breath of life; there, I first enjoyed delicious hopes, which the same house saw blasted. My father and mother are wanderers in the far south, and—I had abandoned them. I would see no more. I wonder at the strange anxiety which has prompted me to seek thus much; to come hither, after so long an interval, merely to behold a ruin! I might have known that I should gain nothing from such a survey, but the resurrection of mocking dreams, and delusive fancies, and foolish hopes—upon which, as upon this little hamlet—we may write nothing but the one word—ruin!"

A big tear stood in the young man's eye—a single drop—the outburst of emotions that even manhood, filled with noble ardor, and moved by great energies, could not utterly repress. And again a deep silence, for a while, succeeded to this brief dialogue. At length, the old man laughed with a subdued chuckle—mixed mirth and melancholy.

"Strange, William, that the hovel should so frequently outlast the stately hall and tower. Such is the process by which Time mocks at pride. Look, where my old school house stands as it did five years ago. There you see the roof, almost black with age, glooming out beneath the shelter of green trees. My favorite oaks, William, still stride about, like ancient patriarchs, spreading great arms as in benediction. Ah! I could embrace them, every one, with the feeling of a son or brother! How much do they recall! It was under their shade that we brooded over the chronicles of old Vertot and Froissart together. They have grown together in my mind with these old chronicles, and

I could fancy the knights of the temple and the hospital all pleasantly encamped beneath their friendly shelter."

"How strange, sir, that the imagination should thus speak out with you, rather than with me. The sight of that wild retreat for our rustic muses brings me other images and aspects, which appeal only to the affections. My fancies, at the sight, bring me glimpses of boyish forms, that leap and run along beneath the shadows. Instead of the trumpets of chivalry, I hear only the merry shouts of boyhood, such as made this little valley ring with the genuine music of the heart in those happy, happy days."

"Music! ah! my dear boy, I little thought it so, when they made my ears ring too, with clamors, which made me pray, a thousand times, for the dreamy and sad silence, such as the scene affords us now. That I should now feel this silence so painfully oppressive, is more profoundly in proof than any other sign, of the terrible character of the human change which the passing time has brought. Where are all these merry children now? The memory of those clamorous shouts, and that happy uproar of boyhood, comes now with a sensible pleasure to my heart, and arouses it with a delicious thrill. And I, who bemoaned the fate which fettered me so long in this obscure hamlet—dead to the world, and wholly unfruitful—even I could be persuaded to entreat of Heaven that the season might return once more. I was not sufficiently grateful, my son, for the peace—with all its boy-clamors—of that rustic solitude. Now, that all is gone, and all is ruin which I see, I feel, for the first time, how very precious and beautiful was it all."

"You have made all this sacrifice for me, my father!" said the young man, while his hand rested fondly upon the arm of the other.

"It was fit I should, William; and you have more than requited me, my son. But, in truth, there was no sacrifice. There was need of change—for me as for you. My own

heart required it. I had grown a discontent. This unperforming life of simple peace and rustic content, is not to be allowed to those who have burning thoughts in their brains, and earnest desires in their hearts. It is for such, only to snatch moments of this sort of life, as it were, for rest and refreshment after toils, and that they may recover strength for new fields of wrestle, and trial, and performance. I had lived in it too long. I *was* rapidly sinking into all sorts of unbecoming dotages. I have grown stronger, and wiser, and better, from the change. I do not deplore it, though I may look with sorrow over the mournful ruins of the once familiar and favorite retreat. It is, indeed, a melancholy spectacle."

"And how very strange that so short a period should destroy every vestige of the life and pleasure of the place!"

"Shall we wonder, when we see how brief a term is needed here to substitute desolation for life, that the great cities of the past should leave so few vestiges—that the very sites of so many should be forgotten? Were we now to descend among the old thoroughfares, we should possibly lose our way, familiar as was once the path—we should find ourselves wondering at the decreased or increased length of distances, at the great size or the smallness of places, the measure of which seems to have been taken on our very hearts. We never think of the change in ourselves!"

"But the fate of the place is still so very curious a mystery. One would think, from what we knew, that every day would only contribute to its utility, and growth, and beauty. Here were health, security, sweetness, innocence—every possible charm—all that should make a village dear to its inhabitants."

"Ah! my son, but its inhabitants lacked the all-in-all, content. You, for example, to whom this peaceful dell was so beautiful, you were one of the first to leave it."

"Yes! But not willingly. I was expelled from it by

cruel necessities, by a harsh and brutal fate. It was with no exulting desire that I left its sacred abodes. They refused any longer to entertain me. I was driven ruthlessly from the sanctuary which denied me refuge any longer."

"And I am one of those who rejoice that you were so driven. The necessity which expelled you from the sanctuary was the mother of a glorious future. It brought out the manhood that was in you. It taught you to know your strength and muscle—forced you to their exercise, and will crown your name with honor!"

"And yet, sir, I would gladly exchange all that I am—all that I hope to be—for the restoration of that hope and home of boyhood, which I was thus driven to abandon."

"No, Willie, you would not. This is only the sentiment of a passing mood, which you will not rationally seek to encourage. It is better as it is! *You* are better as you are; and, to-morrow, when you return to your duties, your performances—the toils you have grappled with so manfully—the field into which you have so nobly sunk the shaft—you will feel how idle is the sentiment which seems so natural to you now. If this was the scene of your boyish sports and hopes, my son, you are not to forget that it was also the scene of your disappointments—your sorrows—your first strifes—your bitter humiliations! Would you go over that period of doubt, and strife, and scorn, and shame? Would you feel anew the pang of denial—the defeat and disappointment of every youthful hope?"

"Do not—do not remind me! It is as you say! And yet, sir, returning to the subject with which we began, how strange that all should have abandoned the village. I was the only *involuntary* exile. I was the only one whom the fates seemed resolute to expel. Why should *they* fly also, and so soon after me? Where should my poor old father, John Hinkley, and my mother, for example, find the motive for leaving the home where they had so long dwelt happily,

and, in the decline of life, why seek an abode upon the Choctaw borders? It could not be the love of gain; they had enough!"

"You forget that your father had become something of a monomaniac. He followed the ministry of John Cross. Your departure, too, my son, had probably something to do with it. His stubborn pride of heart naturally kept him from making any admissions; but I have no doubt he felt keenly the wrong that he had done you. The discovery of the true character of Alfred Stevens must have done a great deal toward disabusing him of his *superstitions*—for they were superstitions really—in respect to both of you. What does your mother say in her last letter?"

"They are well; but she mentions, particularly, that my father never mentions my name, and avoids the subject."

"A proof that he broods upon it, and with no self-satisfaction. Your departure, his, and that of the Coopers, are easily accounted for; and did we know the secret history of all the other villagers—their small, sweet, deceptive hopes; each man's petty calculations, and petty projects—all grounded in some vexing little discontent; there would be no difficulty, I fancy, in finding sufficient reasons, or at least motives, for the flight of all."

"Still, sir, there seems to be a fate in it!"

"Why, yes; if by this word, Fate, you mean a Providence. I have no doubt that these sparrows are all, in some degree, the care of Providence; and, whether they fall or fly, the omniscient eye sees, and the omnipresent finger points. Your error, perhaps, lies in the very natural assumption that mere place, itself, becomes an essential of humanity. These wandering hearts do not cease to beat with hope, because they no longer beat in the cottage of their boyhood. Their limbs do not cease to labor, nor their minds to think, because they break ground and plant stakes in remote forests of the south and west. Mere locality is, after all, a very small consideration, in any question of the

interests of humanity. It is the man that makes the place what it is or should be!"

"I am inclined to think, sir, that we something undervalue the social importance of place. A population loses something of its moral when it wanders. It substitutes a savage wildness for domestic virtues."

"Granted! For a time this is certainly the case. But, on the other hand, an old locality is liable to suffer from the worse evil of moral stagnation; and the cure of this demands the thunder-storm. The extreme conditions usually work out precisely the same consequences in the end; and, in the case of society, the locality is altogether a subordinate condition. My old trees, there, were very grateful to both of us; but I became an imbecile under them, in the enjoyment of the *dolce far niente*—that luxury which has destroyed the very nation from whom we borrow the phrase! And the same delightful condition of *non*-performance, continued for five years, would have ruined *you*, also, for any career of usefulness and manhood. And this would have been a crime, my son, as well as a shame. Neither you nor I, believe me, were designed for the slavish employment—however sweet—

> "To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
> Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair."

"I know not, sir, I know not! Fame is something—something charming and fascinating—having its uses no doubt; and designed for the natural and gradual elevation of the race as well as individual. But the heart ought not to be sacrificed for the brain—the sensibilities and affections for the genius. There should be a life for each, for all; and to surrender the one up entirely to the other, works dismay in the soul, and decay in the sympathies, and leaves ashes only upon the hearth of home!"

"But why the sacrifice of either, my son? Who says surrender the affections to the genius—sacrifice the heart

to the brain! It is *not* the counsel of Milton. It is far from my wish that you should do so. Nourish both. The heart, in fact, the sensibilities, are the absolute necessities of genius. The brain, so far from demanding the annihilation of the affections and sympathies, actually draws constant food from their abundant sources, by which its own strength and vitality are cherished for performance. No intellect is in perfect symmetry unless it maintains a constant intercourse with the warmest human affections. It is altogether a mistake to suppose that they can maintain a separate existence, or that one can preserve its integrity without due co-operation with the other. The most healthy genius is that which never surrenders its humanity. It may suffer disappointment—nay, agony—but it is in the very moment of the heart's worst sufferings that the intellect is most needed, and it furnishes adequate help for support and relief, provided the training of both has been commensurate to their mutual wants and necessities."

"Ah! my dear sir," said the younger shaking his head mournfully—"you forget my fortunes."

"Do I? No, indeed! I repeat, my son, that your fortunes have been equally beneficial to your head and your heart. You mistake, altogether, when you confound a disappointment—the defeat and denial of a boyish hope—with the annihilation of the heart. A hope and fancy are repeatedly crushed out of existence; but we should err very greatly to suppose that *the life* of the affections—the heart—had suffered serious hurt. No! no! Believe me, your heart is quite as sound as ever. What are the proofs? In my sight, they are hourly present, if not in yours. Your disappointments have saddened your fancies, but have they impaired your strength? They have rendered your thoughts graver in hue than is usual with your years, but have they not acquired in vigor what they may have lost in brightness? You do not *play* now with thought, but you can *work* with it, as you never did before. You do not sport and trifle

now with life, but you feel it as a circle spreading everywhere, connecting you with all the links of existence, making you sympathize with all its pulses and vibrations, and sensibly lifting your mood to the contemplation of all its higher offices and duties. In short, you have made a sudden spring from the dreaming, uncaring, unheeding, nature of the boy—as it were in a single night—into the active consciousness of all the responsibilities, glorious though saddening, which belongs to a proper manhood. Now men possess real manhood only in degree with their capacity to perform. Had you been still a dweller in Charlemont—had you gained the objects of your boy desires in that place, you would have sunk into the habitual torpor of the place. You would never have found out what is in you—would have been nothing and done nothing."

"I might have been happy!" answered the other gloomily.

"No! my son. You would have gratified a youthful fancy, and, would have survived it! This is a common history of what is vulgarly called youthful happiness. What would have remained to you then? Misanthropy. The graver necessities of the mind take the place very soon of its boyish fancies, and demand stronger food. Fancy is but the food of a thought just beginning to develop. It requires strong meat very soon after, and this can be afforded only by earnest grappling with care and toil, and trial and pain—those angel overseers, whom God appoints, to goad the truant and the idle nature to its proper tasks. I repeat that your loss in Charlemont is the most fortunate of all your gains."

"Would I could think so, my father. Yet *her* image passes before me ever with so pleading a face. I see her now, as I have seen her a thousand times among those old groves; treading those crags; gliding, with eager and fearless step down those precipices which conduct to the silent, sad, and beautiful tarn, where we were once so fond to

brood. In my mind's eye I shall never cease to behold that beautiful yet mournful memory — two images, so unlike each other, of the same being; one proud, and brave, and noble, like the eagle soaring up in the sunshine; the other gloomy, dispirited, made ashamed, like the same brave bird, with wing broken, the film over his eyes, close fettered in a cage of iron, and with curious fingers pointing to the earth-spots on breast and pinion."

"A pitiful contrast, in sooth, my son, and such as it is very natural that your imagination should frequently depict before your eyes. But both of these images will gradually fade from sight. A newer world will supersede your past; new forms and aspects will take the places of the old; new affections will spring up in your soul; nay, fresh fancies will wing their way to your heart, and a nobler idea of love itself will possess your affections. The heart has resources not less fertile than the fancy. God has not decreed it to isolation. You will see and feel new plants of verdure suddenly appearing upon the waste places; nay, the very heat and ashes of former passions prepare the ground for superior plants of more verdure, strength, and beauty. The time will come when you will wonder that you ever felt the pang and privation which trouble you now. Five years hence you will be unwilling to believe me when I describe, as I hope playfully to do, the fierce troubles of your soul at present."

The youth shook his head negatively, as he said—

"Impossible!"

"One thing is certain, William. You are now confessedly one of the first lawyers in Kentucky. Our little world acknowledges your power. If politics were your aim, the field is open to you, and it invites you. Yet, five years ago, you were desponding on the subject of your capacity. Then, you had misgivings of your strength, and fancied that your powers but imperfectly seconded your wish. Your ambition was then regarded as the dream of a foolish van-

ity, which was destined only to rebuke and disappointment. Look at your position now—behold your own performances. It was but the other day, when Harry Clay said to me: 'He is the most promising of our young men. I would not counsel him to politics; yet, if he should desire *that* field, he will conquer in it. He has the steadfastness, the enlarged view, the industry, and the endowment, which will give him rank among the highest whenever he shall be disposed to fling off the mere lawyer, and embark on the troubled sea of politics.'"

"In truth, a troubled sea."

"Yes; but so far a persuasive one to ambition, as, just now, it needs such a good helmsman for the ship of state. I counsel politics no more than our friend Clay; but the time approaches when no man of mark will be allowed to withhold his seamanship. Keep to the law for the present, and wait your time. I would have no son of mine—no friend—undertake state affairs of any sort till he is fairly thirty or thirty-five. A democracy is the very world in which to break down premature young men. It is the very world for strong men—naturally strong—who have allowed themselves to harden into perfect manhood before they attempt a province in which the wrestle is beyond their strength. You are naturally too well endowed and too well trained to sink into the mere lawyer. You will never forego the nobler powers of generalization in the practice of a petty detail. The very troubles of your affections have thrown the proper burdens upon your mind; and you will go on conquering, my son, until you have equally purged your heart and your understanding of all these delusions. You will forget, among other dreams of boyhood, the very one which has had such an effect, for good upon your fortunes, and for evil, as *you* think, upon your heart. The image of Margaret Cooper will fade from your fancy, or remain only as a study, in which you will be just as likely to wonder at your delusion as to cherish it fondly. There will come a

season when your heart will open to a wiser, and purer and nobler affection—when you will seek and find an object of attachment, who will be more worthy of your love, and will be better able to requite your desires."

"Never! never!—no, sir, no! I freely tell you that, promising as are my social prospects now, honorable as is the reputation which I have acquired, grateful as the future promises to be to my ambition, I would gladly forego all, were I once more restored to that one hope of my boyhood—could I attain now, in her original purity, the one being who filled all my desires, and might have satisfied all my cravings of heart."

"You think so now; but wait. Five years have wrought the most wonderful changes in your mind. Another five years will work other changes, quite as wonderful, in your affections. The destiny before you will not be defrauded. After all, the heart of man keeps very much in the track of his intellect; and the charm that satisfies the one at first, requires in the end to satisfy the other. You will forget—"

Here a sudden start and exclamation of the young man arrested the remarks of the aged speaker, who, the next moment, was confounded to behold his companion rise up at a single bound, and rush almost headlong down the hill. He called to him:—

"What is the matter, William? What do you see?"

The youth did not answer, but, throwing out his arms as he ran, he pointed to the opposite end of the valley, where following with his eyes, the senior caught a glimpse—but a single glimpse—of a female figure, in widow's weeds, retiring from sight. In another moment the figure was hidden from view by the crags of the range of heights beyond. The young man, meanwhile, kept a headlong course, still downward, pursuing his way into the valley of the settlement, with the fleetness of a deer.

"Can it be Margaret Cooper whom he has seen?" mur-

mured the old man to himself, as he slowly rose up, and prepared to follow, but more slowly, down the hill.

"Can she be here? can she be living? and how has she contrived to elude all inquiry? If it be she, how unfortunate! It will revive, in full force, all his wild anxieties. It will arrest him in the nobler course he is now pursuing. But no, no! I have better hopes. God will not suffer this defeat!"

CHAPTER II.

THE UNEXPECTED MEETING.

THE five years of lapsing events which, in the career of William Hinkley, had brought him to distinction in his profession, the esteem of society, the love and admiration of friends, had been productive of very different results to the woman he had once loved with all the ardor of ingenuous passion, and for whom, as we have seen, he still entertained emotions, if not affections, of the most tender regard and interest. She had sunk from the heights of self-esteem to the lowest depths of self-abasement. She, the village-beauty, proud equally of her intellect and personal charms, had, in this to her dreary interval, been fettered in an obscurity as impenetrable by others as it was deep, dark, and humiliating, to herself. Of the cruel sorrows of this period it is impossible to make any adequate record. The gnawing misery of hopelessness; the consciousness of sin and weakness; the bitterness of defrauded hopes, and aims, and powers; the loss of name, position, love; the forfeiture of all those precious regards which are so necessary to the life of the young, the beautiful, and the ambitious—these had worked their natural consequences, in the thought perpetually brooding over the ruin, in which every flower of hope, and pride, and love, had been stifled in dust and ashes.

Yet she lived! She would willingly have died. She prayed for death. She meditated death by her own hands; and it was the indulgent providence of God alone—by

almost direct interposition—that saved her from this last dreadful method of escape from the terrible soul-suffering of those last five years.

Strange that she should thus live—with her pride, and all her passions, rendered mad by disappointment, preying perpetually upon her heart! For a time, there was a weary blank in her existence, in which she did not even dream. Her vitality seemed utterly suspended. When she recovered from this condition, which was meant as a merciful alleviation of her acuter sufferings, it was to endure the active gnawings of her grief. For another period, her life was a long spasm—a series of spasms—in which she was conscious of no security from hour to hour—in which all in her soul was in wild uproar and confusion—storm and calm alternating ever—and no certainty of life or sanity for a single day. That was the period of her greatest peril. It had been easy for her then, by a single blow, to end the terrible history; and a thousand times, during this period, did she murmur to herself—

"It is surely not so difficult to die!"

But they watched her! The deed was prevented. She lived, and lived for another passion—darker even than suicide, and more deadly. To this she bent all her thoughts. To this she gave all her prayers. Shame, defeat, overthrow—the utter annihilation of all her ambitious dreams—these brought her none of those humiliations of pride in which the prayer for grace and mercy find their origin, and realize the blessed fruits of penitence. The blow, which humbled her for ever in society, had only wounded her pride, not crushed it; only stung her brain to madness, not soothed it with a sense of feebleness and dependence, making it a fit home for gentle thoughts, and subdued desires, and a strengthening humility. Her prayers, for a long season, were addressed only to the gratification of that wild justice which infuses the savage soul with the dream of vengeance!—

"Being mortal still, [she] had no repose,
But on the pillow of revenge! Revenge—
Who sleeps to dream of blood; and, waking, glows
With the oft-baffled, slakeless thirst!—"

There was but one victim. But the fates interposed for his safety—and her own. She was in no situation to gratify her desires. She knew not how to name—knew not where to seek—the spoiler of her happiness. She was a woman, and must wait her time—wait on circumstance and chance, and the favoring succor of that subtle demon whom she called upon in place of Deity. And he finally responded to her call.

But there was a dreary interval to be overcome and endured.

In this period, her whole person, as her soul, had undergone a curious change. The fair, white skin became jaundiced. The fine, dark, expressive eye had assumed a dull, greenish hue, and seemed covered with a filmy glaze. Her frame became singularly attenuated, her limbs feeble; she frequently sunk from exhaustion, and would lie for hours, gasping upon her bed, or upon the dried leaves of the forest, in the shades of which she perpetually sought escape from the sight of human eyes. That she survived the long strain upon her faculties of mind and body, was wonderful to all. Yet she did survive.

More! she gradually threw off the feebleness and suffering of the frame. She was again endowed with a noble hardihood of constitution. She had a proud, steadfast, enduring will. The very working of her passions, now concentrated upon a single object, seemed, after a certain period of prostration, to work for her relief. Gradually another change followed. Her skin became cleared. The jaundice disappeared. Her eyes became healthy in expression—bright as before—but not happy in their brightness; luminous, yet wild; of a gloomy beauty, in which the whole face shared. She did not smile again, or, if she did, it was

in a manner to mock the smile with bitterness. Her mind resumed its activity, though it still pursued what the moralist may well call an insane direction, fixed only upon a single object, which seemed to supersede all others. Formerly, she had felt, and dreamed, and imagined, poetry; now she wrote it—wild, dark, spasmodic fancies glowing in her song, which was wholly impulsive, not systematic—the effusion of blood and brain working together intensely, and relieving themselves by sudden gushes which were like improvisations.

It was sometime after she had reached this condition, when, one day, she declared her intention to revisit Charlemont. Her retreat was only seven miles from this spot, in an obscure farm to which no public road conducted.

Her mother somewhat wondered at this desire, but did not oppose it. They were both well aware of the change which five years had wrought in the fortunes of this once beautiful village. It had been productive of sore loss to them in money. They had sold their little cottage, under mortgage, and the purchaser had abandoned the property, leaving the debt unpaid. Something was said by Margaret of the necessity of seeing that the building was kept in repair, but the suggestion was only made as a sort of pretext justifying the visit. The mother very well knew that the daughter had another motive. Though by no means a sagacious interpreter of heart or mind, she yet readily understood that the proposed visit was the fruit of some morbid fancy; but she did not see that any evil would result from suffering Margaret to indulge her mood; and, in fact, she had long since learned that opposition was by no means the process by which to effect her objects with her daughter, or to bring her mind into the proper condition in which it usually regards the social requisitions as the natural law. She offered no objection accordingly.

The little family *carry-all*—a snug, simple box, drawn by one horse—was got in readiness, the negro driver

mounted, and the girl departed upon her secret mission of sad thought, and melancholy revery, in a region which had been the source of all her sorrows.

She sought the old cottage, penetrated its silent chambers, and busied herself for awhile in a search of closets which seemed to afford her nothing. Her search led her to sundry bundles of old papers. These she pulled apart and examined in detail. From these she extracted some scraps which she put away carefully in her bag, and after this, she scarcely looked at the dwelling, which already needed the regards of locksmith and carpenter.

How soon the favorite place goes to ruin if left to itself. There shall be a snug simple house, in which your heart first found its want, your soul its first speech, your dearest joy its first satisfaction, and five years after you have abandoned it, it will be desolate—the lichen will glide over its walls; the door will fall from its hinges; the shutter, the sash, drop to fragments. Shall time spare us any more than our dwellings?

Yet can he not utterly destroy!

The heart recognises a soul in the lonely and desolated ruin. There is a subtle spirit appealing to you from every corner. Nay, you will surely hear voices in the lonely rooms which call upon all the affections to restore, rebuild —return!

Poor Margaret heard these voices all around her. They startled her. They seemed to mock her fall—to depict the state from which she had fallen—to compare her own with the desolation of the scene around her. And finally, they spoke in the well-remembered tones of her betrayer. She fancied she heard Alfred Stevens close beside her, whispering his subtle eloquence—those snares of fancy and passion which he had so successfully woven for her ruin.

And this voice lifted her into strength. Then she remembered that she had an oath of vengeance; and she went forth from the lonely dwelling, only half conscious that she

went, and almost heedless of her steps, she took her way up the rocky heights to the lonely tarn whither she had so often wandered with *him*.

And the past returned to her memory, and filled her imagination with all its chronicles of mixed sweet and bitter—pride and shame—and keen was the agony that followed, and terrible the oath which she now renewed, of vengeance for the wrongs she had suffered and the degradation which she must perforce endure. She had no future, but in the accomplishment of this one terrible oath; and she renewed it with fearful brevity and solemnity in the shadows of those towering rocks, above the deep dark waters of the silent lake—by the very scenes which had witnessed her overthrow, she called for witnesses to confirm her oath!

And what a picture to mind and eye did she present at that moment—still young, still beautiful—of noble figure, commanding form, bright haughty eye, and a face gloomily lovely—as she stood forward on the edge of the precipice, and looked forth to sky and rock, her hand slowly rising in adjuration, as simple as it was stern and imposing.

What witnesses, of her wrongs and sufferings, her wild hopes and haughty aims, and their cruel defeat, were all the objects which encompassed her. They were a part of herself. They had taught, informed, encouraged her nature. She had lived in and with them all, and all, in turn, had infused their nature into hers. These rocks had taught her height and hardihood; these waters, depth and contemplation, and the tender nursing of solitary fancies; the woods had lessoned her heart with repose; and the skies, with their eagles ever going upward, had taught her aspiration.

Very mournful were they now in her eyes, assembled as witnesses of her fate. She was their child. Their sad aspects were those of loving parents defrauded of every hope. They might well attest with sympathetic sternness of brow,

and sadly echoing voices, her brief, savage oath of vengeance.

"Yes," she murmured, "ye were all the witnesses of my wrongs, my blindness, my madness, my simple faith, and cruelly-abused confidence. Here it was, that I listened to the subtle voice of the beguiler, even as the drowsing eagle, to the spells of the serpent, while he winds himself fatally about the neck of the free bird of the mountain!

"Oh! why did ye not fall upon me, rocks—upon both of us—ere I hearkened to the lying temptor—who deluded me with my own hopes, and made my own daring aspirations the very spells by which to destroy me!

"Why, waters, when I fell headlong into your embrace, did ye not engulf me for ever. Any fate had been better far than this!

"Cruel wast thou, that day, in thy loving-kindness, William Hinkley, when thou drew'st me forth from their abysses!

"Verily, thou hadst *thy* vengeance, William, for all the scorn which I gave thee in return for love, in the misery for which thou hast preserved me!

"Oh! thinking of all that time—of the fond, foolish vanity which so uplifted me, only to fling me down for ever from my pride of place and hope—I could weep tears of blood, tears of blood!

"But mine eyes are dry. Would I could weep!

"Alas, the sorrows that deny the heart its tears are such only as fill it with gall and venom! Wonder not, Alfred Stevens, when I face thee with death and terror!—Oh, when we meet! when we meet!

"And we *shall* meet! I feel that we shall meet. There is a whisper, as that of a fate, or a demon, that breathes in mine ears the terrible promise. We shall meet!—thou, and I—and—Death!—"

And she crouched down upon the boulder upon which she had been standing, on the very brink of that dark and

silent lake, and buried her face within her hands, as if to shut out from sight the images of horror which that promised meeting had raised up before her imagination.

Poor, desolate woman! There was still a strife in her heart, of contending hate and tenderness. The woman who has once loved, however mistakenly, unwisely, and to her own ruin, never altogether loses the sentiment which even her destroyer has inspired. It is still a precious sentiment. It pleads in his behalf; and if he be not heartless, and cold, and cruel, it will not wholly plead in vain. Mercy will interpose against hate, and the hand of vengeance will be apt to fall nerveless, even when about to strike fatally.

But mercy does not plead for Alfred Stevens. He had shown no redeeming tenderness. He had proved himself heartless—wantonly cruel—indifferent to the desolating doom which his guilty passions had brought upon her. Margaret Cooper could feel tenderness still, but it was not for him. Here, her soul was resolute, her will iron. She did not recoil from the horrible deed on his account, but her own. It was the recoil of the feminine nature alone, and not pity, that made her shrink from the fearful images of blood which were conjured up by her excited fancy.

But, suddenly, in the midst of her dream of terror and revenge, she starts—she starts to her feet, with a bound that makes the rock vibrate and quiver beneath her, on the very edge of the precipice.

A voice is calling to her from the opposite side of the lake. But a single word she hears:—

"Margaret!"

She looks beyond the water, and on a cliff above the lake she sees the figure of a man—a noble, graceful figure—whom she recognises in a moment.

"God of heaven! it is William Hinkley!"

The words are only murmured. She waves her hand out involuntarily, as if to say:—

"Away! we must not meet! There must be no speech between us!"

And then she starts, recedes from the stream, and, with hasty steps, glides into the cover of rock and forest. She was gone from sight in another moment, hurrying down the cliffs to the road where her carriage had been left at a little distance.

William pursued—without any purpose, except to meet, to see, to speak once more to the woman whom he had loved, but with whom, as a single moment of thought would have assured him, he could have no closer communion.

He pursued, but at disadvantage. He was compelled to compass the lake which lay between them. He pursued with the fleet bounds of the practised mountaineer, over the cliffs, and through the umbrage; but in vain. She had reached the carriage ere he had descended from the heights. She had leaped in, and, with stern, low words, through closely-compressed lips, she said to the negro driver:—

"Drive fast!—fast as you can!"

When the young man descended to the valley-road, she was gone. He could only catch the faint echoes of the receding wheels.

CHAPTER III.

PHILOSOPHIES OF AGE AND YOUTH.

"Now should we make moral anatomies
Of these two natures — hostile, yet so like."

And thus they met — and thus they parted!

Both creatures seeking the ideal; born for other things than mere bread and meat; born for love, for performance, for triumph; neither satisfied — both desponding: the one with the half-fanciful griefs of youth, which are designed to strengthen, even as the obstruction which taxes and strains yet expands and improves the muscle; the other with shame, which depresses the energies that it may refine them, and humbles the pride that it may waken the heart to becoming sensibilities.

The one retires from the fruitless interview sad, disappointed, but, just in the same degree, better prepared to pursue one steady aim to right and complete achievement; the other, having her aim also, but one of a kind still further to humble pride, awaken sensibility, and, through agony, to conduct to peace!

Very different their objects, desires, performances; but both working out results for humanity, such as, in the progress of the life-ordeal, gradually inform society with new aspects and properties in man, and unfold the exactions of a progress in the ages, whose necessities evolve, through vice itself, the true conditions of all virtue.

Shall they ever meet again, and how? Shall they realize

the vague hopes and objects that now persuade both minds? shall they ever become to each other more than they are now? shall *he* attain greater triumphs of intellect—better securities of the heart? shall *she* find the peace which she yearns for, even more than the wild justice which she seeks? will she regain the wing of her youth and innocence, and steadily develop the gradual powers of that ambitious genius which, in the very daring and pride of its aim, blinded her wholly to the dangers of her flight? We can not prescribe the course and conditions of their progress: we must be content simply to follow, and record them. They are in the hands of a self-made destiny, and must, because of will, and passion, and peculiar aims, determine their own fates. It is not for art to pass between, to interpose, to prevent, or pervert, or in any way alter, the fortunes of those whose own characters constitute the arbitrary necessities governing equally their lives and our invention.

Sad, silent, full of roused thoughts and conflicting emotions, Margaret Cooper drove home to her obscure farmstead, musing to herself, and murmuring within her soul, of the past and of the future.

That single glance of an old and rejected lover—that one imploring word from his lips—smote on her heart with a sense of agonizing self-reproach. Her thoughts, framed into speech, might have run as follow:—

"With him I might have been happy. He was young, truthful, honorable. He loved me: that I felt then—that I know now. He would have cherished me with affection, as he approached me with devotion! Yes! I might have been happy with him!—

"But I knew him not! I undervalued him. I regarded him as the obscure peasant—having no high purpose—no mind—no great thoughts and ambitious fancies—such as should properly mate with mine!

"Even in this was I mistaken! He had the faculties, but I was not wise enough to see them. I was blinded by

my own wandering visions—that miserable vanity which relished no spectacle that did not present me with some image of myself—which, in perpetual self-delusion, could see nothing in the qualifications of another!

"Yet, how bravely and nobly did that young man declare himself at last! how wisely did he speak! how clearly did he see the dangers gathering about me! how, with what instinct, did he pierce the secret of that cunning serpent!—while I, who despised him for the very humility of his aims—the very modesty of his passion—I could see nothing. I was a fool! a fool!—blind, deaf, mad! But for this, we might have been happy together. It might have been! it might have been!

"Oh, mournful words!—'It might have been!'

"Too late! too late!

"Love is impossible to me now. The dream is gone! the hope—every hope! Even ambition is impossible! Alas, what a dream it was! how wild, how impossible from the first! Yet, I believed it all. Fool! fool! as if such could be the fortune of a woman! Here, too, in this savage region of shadow and obscurity, a woman conquering position, high place, high honors, great distinction! And I believed it all!—believed him, that treacherous serpent, when he crept with the subtle, sweet, lying whisper to my heart! O fool! fool! fool!

"But I am awake now! I no longer delude myself! None can delude me now!

"Yet, to lose this so precious delusion! Oh, the misery of this conviction, for in losing this I have lost all!

"Yet, was it a delusion? Could I not have achieved this distinction? Is it true that there is no field for woman's genius? is it true that, of all this great country, there is no one region where the wisdom and the inspiration of woman can compel faith and find tribute? is she to be a thing of base uses always, as the malignant Iago has declared her? God, thou hast not designed this—else

wherefore hast thou given her the will to soar, the faculty to sing, the genius to conceive, the art to refine and beautify, the sensibilities which make the beautiful her dream and her necessity alike!

"It is a mystery—a mystery!

"And I am hopeless! lost! lost! All lost—lost to all! Nothing left me but—"

She buried her face in her hands; she shuddered. The terrible images, thronging about the one vindictive passion which her soul now entertained and fostered, seemed to gather before her eyes, and she covered them as if to shut out the fearful spectacle. She murmured audibly, after a brief pause:—

"I would I had not seen William Hinkley to-day! The sight of him has weakened me. His voice seems to ring even now so mournfully in my ears—'Margaret!'

"How often have I heard that name upon his lips—so tenderly—so pleadingly always—with so much sweetness and humility!

"I despised him then. I looked down upon him then—with scorn—with contempt. O Margaret, Margaret! and thou darest not look upon him now! Shame, shame! my cheek burns with shame, as I think of him, and remember the calling of his voice.

"Yes! yes! we might have been happy together!

"Too late! too late! I can be happy no more!"

We need not listen any longer to these mournful memories of ruined hopes and lost honors, defeated ambition, defrauded affection, bitter self-reproach, and still-sleepless and ever-goading passions. We need not follow her to the obscure retreat where she has striven for five dreary years to bury out of sight the secret of her shame. Enough that we have put on record the condition of her moods—her broken spirit, her almost purposeless intellect, and the one hope—the only one—which she seems to entertain. These will suffice as clues for the future, showing the *motif*, the

key-note, of much that prevails in the melancholy history which follows.

Let us return to the young man whose disappointment we have just witnessed. He, too, as we have seen, has his griefs and trials; but, unlike hers, they are not of a sort to bring humiliation in their train.

When he found his pursuit was vain, and when the last faint echoes of the receding carriage-wheels came to his ears, he clasped his hands spasmodically together.

"She would not see me! she would not even speak with me! She feels the old scorn; she knows not that I am no longer the obscure peasant that she knew me once!"

Foolish youth! as if the fact, even if known to her, that he had won successes, and was glowing with the prospects and promises of fame, would have made her more tolerant of his presence.

It was shame, not scorn, which made her fly from that meeting.

It was a wild and stifling sense of agonizing humility that made her wave him off, in despair, as one of the most knowing witnesses of her fall from the proud heights where he had once loved to behold and do her honor.

Scorn now for him, on the part of Margaret Cooper, was impossible. It was fear, shame, horror, terror—nay, a sense of justice, and a new feeling of respect, if not reverence—that made her shrink before his face.

Brooding sadly upon his disappointment, with bewildering thoughts and conflicting feelings, the young man slowly made his way back through the valley of Charlemont, going unconsciously among the deserted dwellings, in the direction of the heights where he had left his venerable companion. As he passed the schoolhouse, he heard the voice of the senior calling to him from the shade of the great oaks by which it was overhung.

He joined him in silence.

The old man was sitting upon the turf beneath the trees.

a thoughtful smile upon his countenance. He was once more in the well-remembered places in which so many years of his life had been spent. Here he had himself mused and meditated, from a safe distance, the capricious changes and frauds of busy life among the crowd. Here he had given the first lessons, in the humanities, to the young man who now made his way in silence and sat down beside him.

"Well," said the elder, "did you overtake her, William?"

"You saw her, then?" was the indirect reply.

"Yes, I saw a female, in widow's weeds, but only for a moment. She disappeared among the rocks in an instant after. I concluded, from the wild haste of your movement, that you had recognised her as Margaret Cooper. Was I right?"

"Yes!"

"Did you speak with her?"

"No, sir; she fled from me—waved me off as I called to her, and disappeared in the thicket. When I succeeded in getting round the lake where I saw her, she was gone. I could just catch the sounds of carriage-wheels. She still scorns or hates me as much as ever."

"She does neither, my son. On this subject you seem to lose all your usual powers of reasoning. Margaret Cooper would not see, or speak with you, from very shame and humiliation. Why should she speak with you? Have you anything of a pleasant kind to communicate to each other? Why should she see you? To be reminded only of a history full of mortification to her! You are unreasonable, my son."

The other had no answer.

"And now, William, pray tell me why you desired to see her. You have, no doubt, some of your old feelings for her; but is it really in your thought to marry Margaret Cooper?"

"Oh, no, sir!—no! How could you suppose such a thing?"

"I do *not* suppose such a thing, and therefore I say that you are very unreasonable, nay, more, unkind and cruel, in your attempt to see her. You have no business with her; you have no reason to suppose that you can help her in any way; and your passion for her—whatever of it now remains—is not such as to prompt you to make her your wife. You obeyed only a youthful impulse in desiring to see her, without reflecting upon the cruelty of the proceeding. It was this blind impulse only; for I know you too well to think that you would be thus moved by a merely wanton, and, in respect to her, a cruel curiosity."

"You are right, sir. It was a blind impulse. I am a boy still. I shall never be wise."

"Nay! nay! you do yourself wrong. If to be wise required that we should never be wrong—should never feel an impulse, and in the moment obey it—I should agree with you, and argue against your intellect and moral with yourself. But, you are simply young, ardent, sensitive, with a free gush of blood from the heart to the brain, such as time and training only will enable you to regulate. We must learn to wait on youth. All in due season. It is enough for me to see that you are in the right course, generally, though sometimes, like a young and fiery Arabian, you bolt the track. But, the present opportunity for a lesson must not be foregone. I hope that you will never again repeat this cruelty to this unhappy woman. She has shown you always, as well in the day of her pride as in that of her shame, that she does not sympathize with your affections. You yourself admit that, even were she to do so, you could never offer yourself to her in marriage. She has in no way given you to believe that she needs your services either as man or lawyer. We know that, though in moderate circumstances, she needs no succor in money. Now, on what pretence of reason would you seek to see her? What pre-

text of humanity, or law, of manhood, or sympathy of any sort, can be urged for your thrusting yourself upon a person who distinctly shows you that she desires no communion with you. I repeat, she does not scorn or hate you, William, but the meeting with you must necessarily be painful to her. Why should you inflict this pain?"

"No more, sir, please say no more. I will not err in this manner again."

The young man spoke with a choking effort, and his head hung down, and a great drop fell from his eyes.

"Impulse, by a law of nature, is necessarily a selfishness. Our duty, for this reason is to curb it. Impulse rarely allows us to recognise the rights of others, their situation or their sensibilities. It is humanity only, that requires that we should set reason on perpetual watch, as a good house-dog, to see that this outlaw, impulse, does not break down the door, and break into the close, to the terror, if not the destruction, of the trembling flock within."

"Enough on this head, sir. I will not err again."

"Another, my son, of quite as much importance to yourself and of even more importance to others. You have chosen a profession. A profession, once chosen, constitutes a pledge to the Deity for the proper working out of your human purposes, and the exercise of your peculiar gifts. Passions, and fancies, and desires, which keep us away from our duties—which make us work sluggishly at them, and without proper sympathy and energy, are indulged sinfully. You must fight against them, Willie. You must not only give up the pursuit of Margaret Cooper—as I know you will—but you must give up the very thought of her."

"How is that possible?"

"It *is* possible. It must be done. You have but to resolve, Willie; and be equally resolved upon the law! You must give up Eros, and all the tributary muses of that god.

They still too much employ your thought. Look at what I copied last night from the fly leaf of your docket."

The senior produced a sheet of paper, and in somewhat lackadaisacal accents, read the following verses:—

SING NOT OF FAME.

I.

"Sing not of Fame! There was a time
Such song had suited well mine ear,
When passion had sought, perchance through crime,
Ambition's laurelled pomps to wear;
The wild desire, th' impetuous thirst,
The wing to soar, the will to sway,
Had led me on, through fields accurst,
On all life's precious things to prey.
Sing not of Fame.

II.

"Oh! rather sing of lonely hours,
And sleepless nights and mournful sighs,
When on his couch of blasted flowers,
Despair looks up with loathing eyes;
In vain, with visions straining far,
Hope seeks dear shape and baffled dream;
And wandering on, from star to star,
Finds mockery in each golden gleam.
Sing not of fame!"

"Now, Willie, these are what the newspapers would call very good verses; nay, there are some moralists, even in the pulpit, who, regarding the one proposition only, which rebukes ambition, would hold them to contain very proper sentiments. Yet they are all wrong."

"Oh! sir, waste no more words upon such a theme. It is a poor trifle. I did not mean that you should see it. Give it me, sir, or tear it up if you please."

"Nay, nay, I will do neither, Willie. They will better represent my sentiment than yours. It is for him whose own struggles of ambition have resulted in vanities, to declare ambition itself a vanity; but if it be such, it is one which is at once natural and of the best uses to humanity. Were it not for ambition, ours would be a brute world

merely. There would be little in life, worth more than a good grazing patch to a hungry buffalo. It is ambition that puts in exercise all the agencies of art and civilization. It is ambition that sires all public virtues. I do not now mean that poor drivelling vanity, which foolish people call ambition, but that glorious builder and destroyer, who makes great empires, and achieves great results, and wrestles and toils for the victory, and is never so well satisfied as in the toil and the conflict, without one moment considering the results to self. Its presence implies strength for achievement, courage to dare new paths, enthusiasm to sustain against defeat, power to conceive and create agencies, and art to work out all the processes of great and bold and novel performance. This is my notion of ambition, and the fame which follows, or should follow such performances, is a legitimate object of human desire—but only where the endowment really exists."

"Ah, sir, this brings me to my particular trouble, and, no doubt, justifies the sentiment of my ballad. What if I really lack the endowments which, alone, have the right to crave the laurel? It is your affectionate interest, alone, I fear, which holds them to be in my possession."

"Not so, my son. I have no doubts of your possessions—nay, have little of the use which you are destined to make of them. I know, too, that your song is but the fruit of a temporary despondency—the voice of a momentary mood, in which the sensitive nature rather rests herself than desponds. We are all more or less liable to these fits of despondency, and they have their uses. They fling the mind back upon the heart, and contribute to check its froward tendencies. They counsel due caution and humility to progress. They teach modesty to conquest. I do not fear them in your case, though I counsel you against too great indulgence of them. You would feel them even if you had never been denied by Margaret Cooper. They are signs, in fact, of the ambitious nature which thus deplores

its own slow progress. But too much encouraged—and they have their beguiling attractions to a nature such as yours—they are apt to enfeeble. They encourage revery, which is always a dangerous pleasure, as it induces inaction. In our world, the demands of society require sleepless activity and vigilance. If we pause too long for rest—if we too much dream—we wake to find some other person in possession of our conquests. You are now with hand upon the plough, and there must be no misgiving—no hesitation. To-morrow, as Milton hath it—'to fresh fields and pastures new.' And you will feel this new impulse to-morrow. You will forget your disappointment of heart—I should say fancy rather—in fresh motives to struggle. You will one day wonder, indeed, that Margaret Cooper should have been so dear to you."

"Never! never!"

"Ay, but you will, and forget her beauties and charms, her bold talent and commanding nature, in still superior attractions."

The youth shook his head with mournful denial.

"So will it be, Willie. That the boy should love at seventeen or eighteen—that he should *insist* upon loving at that period—nay, *fancy* the charms which inspire passion—is his absolute necessity. But the passion of this period is still but a boy passion only. His heart will rarely be touched by it. I would not have your passion absorbed by your ambition. I would only use the one passion to restrain and regulate the choice of the other. Do you suppose that God has made us so inflexible that but one woman in all the world should satisfy the longings of the heart? If so, and you never should meet with this one woman? Besides, do you not see how perfectly childish it is to suppose, at twenty five—when youth is all vigor; when every muscle is a conscious power; when the heart and head are full of powers; all demanding exercise; when the fancy is on perpetual wing; when the imagination daily communes with

some ideal, bringing out the wing into the sunshine—how childish then to fancy that life can be without purposes, and hope no longer a thing of aim, filled with generous desires! Your ballad, as I have said, declares only for a temporary mood which another day will dissipate. You have only read too much of Byron. This mood was his *rôle*. It was at once true and false. True, as it illustrated a temporary mood; false, as it insisted upon this mood as a fatality; making that a life, which was only a passing cloud over the face of life."

The subject had led the old man on much farther than he had designed. The youth submitted patiently to his ancient teacher. It was thus that his youth had been lessoned: thus that his heart and fancy had been trained; so that, with all his seeming impulse and despondency, his aims were really more in harmony with his powers, than is usually the case with most young men.

We have dwelt longer upon this sort of teaching than is necessary to our story—*as a story*. But we have had our object in our desire for the proper characterization of both parties. The novel only answers half its uses when we confine it to the simple delineation of events, however ingenious and interesting.

There was a brief pause in the dialogue, when the elder, without leaving the subject of conversation, presented it to his young companion's mood through another medium. He had his objects, we may say, in thus familiarizing the *mind* of the youth with the annoying topic. Could he transfer the case from the courts of the affections to those of the brain—we do not mean to say, from the lower to the upper courts—he felt that he should work very considerably toward the relief of moods which were a little too much indulged in for propriety, and, perhaps, safety.

"It is somewhat surprising, William, that Margaret Cooper never once detec ed your sympathies with poetry, and your own occasional wooings of the muse. Had she

done so, it would, I think, have greatly helped your woo-ings of herself. Did you ever show her any of your verses?"

"Never, sir."

"And you never once, I suspect, betrayed any desire to see her verses?"

"Never, sir! I thought only of *her*."

"Had you been a worldling, William, with a better knowledge of human nature, and *woman* nature, you might have been more successful. Alfred Stevens knew better. He simply held the mirror before the eyes of her vanity. He showed her her own portrait even as she desired to see it—as she was accustomed to see it. He pleased her *with herself*. He confirmed her notions of herself. He gave his sympathies to her ambition, and never troubled himself about her affections, which he soon discovered were properly approachable only through her ambition. The great secret of conquest over such persons is to become a necessary minister to their most passionate desires. The devil worked thus cunningly with Eve. He works, in this very wise, with all our passions. You might have succeeded as Stevens did, had you been a student of humanity—had you been capable of the painful study of its weaknesses, and willing to descend to the mean occupation of stimulating them into excesses. This poor girl lived only in her ambition. Her affections were all bonded to her brain. This made her bold—made her confident of strength. She did not fear her affections—she did not crave sympathy for *them*. She could only do so, after her fall from place and purity. Had your sympathies been given to her intellect, and had you shown her your capacity to sympathize fully with, and appreciate the objects of her own desire, you could have won all the affections that she was able to bestow. You would be more successful in pursuit now."

"But you can not think, sir, that I have *now* any purpose—any wish——"

He paused.

"No! that is impossible now, I know. Your own pride, your own ambition, if nothing else, would preserve you from any such desire. I am speaking, now, only of the natural change in her, such as her changed condition necessarily works. In her fall, her mind became humanized. Her heart is even purer, and truer now, in its shame—has more vitality, more sensibility, more delicacy, more sympathy with the really true and good—than she had when her name was without spot. Margaret Cooper did not fall through vicious inclinations, but a wilful pride. I regard her as far more really virtuous, *now*—as now conscious of the value of virtuous sympathies—conscious, in other words, of a heart-development—than she was in the day of her insolent pride, when her vanity stood unrebuked by any consciousness of lapse or weakness. The humility which follows shame is one of the handmaids employed to conduct to virtue."

And thus, resting upon the hill-side, and looking down upon that ruined hamlet, age and youth discoursed of the past, as if life had no future. But the future hath its germ in the past, and the present is a central point of survey, from which the wise may behold both oceans. We shall see, in our progress, what was the result of this serious discourse, which places in our hands certain of the clues to the tale which follows—which sounds the preluding notes, and prepares us, in some degree, for the social tragedy which the rude chronicle of the border-historian has yielded to the purposes of art.

The sun was rapidly passing down the slope of heaven. The valley of Charlemont began to look colder and darker in the eyes of our two companions. They had turned aside from their appointed road to take a last look, and a final farewell of the old-remembered places. This done, they prepared to depart. In another hour they were slowly riding through the paths of the forest, directing their course for the dwelling of Edward Hinkley, a cousin of William,

who was now a thriving young farmer, in a beautiful tract of country, some twelve miles farther on. While they sat at his cheerful fireside that night, they discoursed of everything but their mournful visit, and the encounter that day with Margaret Cooper. Her name was not once mentioned in William's presence. Ned's fiddle enlivened the family circle after supper, and while the buoyant young man played for his sombre cousin, and the more ancient guest, the thought of William wandered off to the unknown dwelling of Margaret.

Where was she then? How employed? With what hopes, in what condition?

Could he have seen her brooding that night over the meeting of that day! Could he have heard her mournful exclamations of self-reproach—seen with what dreary aspect, she mused on the terrible words: "Too late—too late!" his sympathies would have made him forgetful of all the counsels of his venerable friend. As it was, he heard but little of his cousin's violin. The gay sounds were lost upon his senses. His revery depicted still mournfully enough, though inadequately, the condition of the unhappy woman, isolated by her own intellect as by her defeat and shame. There she sat, in her own lonely chamber, with but one companion—the muse—brooding over her fate until the gloomy thought took the form of verse—the only process left her by which to relieve the over-burdened brain. We shall assert a privilege denied to William, and look over her as she writes. Her verses, singularly masculine as well as mournful, will constitute a sufficient and appropriate prelude, to the sequel of her unhappy story.

"'Tis meet that self-abandoned I should be,
Whom all things do abandon! Where is Death?
I call upon the rocks and on the sea:
The rocks subside—the waters backward flee—
The storm degenerates to the zephyr's breath,
And even the vapors of the swamp deny

Their poison! It is vain that I would die!
Earth hath not left one charity for me!
Fate takes no shape to fright me — none to save,
Or stifle, and I live as in a grave
Where only death is wanting.
Oh! the gall,
And bitter of a life where this is all!
Where one can neither drink, nor dream, nor choke,
And freedom's self is but a bond and yoke,
And breath and sight denial!
Why the light,
When the life's hope is sightless? Why the bloom,
When naught of flavor's left upon the taste?
Why beauty, when the earth refuses sight,
Leaving all goodliest things to go to waste? —
And why not Death when Life's itself a tomb!"

CHAPTER IV.

LAW IN DESHABILLE.

"Fun is your true philosophy: the laugh
Still speaks the winning wisdom."

With change of scene, we change the nature of the action. Life shows us hourly all the rapid transitions of the kaleidoscope: now we share the bright, now the dark; now the scintillating gleams of a thousand tiny sparklers, in wreaths, and roses, stars, and beautiful twinings, that seem as endless in variety of form as color—and anon the cold formality of cross and square, and the solemn significance of the perpetual circle, which leaves the eye no salient beauty upon which to rest. The youth weeps to-day, with a grief that seems altogether too hard to bear; and he laughs to-morrow with a joy that seems as wild, and capricious, and as full of levity and hum, as the life in the little body of a humming-bird. And so, we pass, *per saltem*, from gay to grave, from lively to severe, and if reason be the question, in either change, with quite as little justification in any! We are creatures of a caprice which might be held monstrously immoral and improper, were it not that caprice is just as essential to the elasticity and tone of humanity, as it is to the birds and breezes.

But, whatever, the changing phase of the mood and the moment, the *motif* of the performance is the same. We get back, all of us, to the old places in our circle. We set

our figures in our drama, and they laugh or weep, droop or dance, are sad or merry, as the case may be; but never materially, or for any length of time, to baffle the fates, which are just as arbitrary in the world of art, as in that of humanity. If therefore, we, who have so recently been dwelling on very gloomy topics—presenting only dark and sombre, and even savage aspects to the mirror—now show ourselves in quite other characters and costume, this is no fault in us, nor does it conflict with the absolute law in our progress. *That* is written, as indelibly as were the laws of Mede and Persian, and the *decrees* of court undergo no fluctuation, though there may be a burst of mistimed merriment during the course of the trial. The change of scene will make a difference—change of costume, and the introduction of new characters. Besides, as we have already gravely taught, the moods of mind have no permanent influence, or but very little, on the real nature, the true character of the subject, which has its own atmosphere, and tends inevitably to decreed results, which, to be legitimate, must be systematic throughout, and arbitrary in all their workings. We can not help it, if, while the mournful procession is in progress to the grave, and the bolt strikes down the noble, and the gloomy pall hides the bright and beautiful from loving eyes—if fools laugh the while, and the cold, the base, the cruel, pursue each their several little, sneaking, scoundrelly purposes, working against the sweetest humanities of life and culture!

With this *caveat* against any mistakes of assumption, we raise the curtain upon other scenes and characters.

The city of Frankfort, in the noble state of Kentucky, is very beautifully situated upon the banks of the river of that name. It is overlooked by a cluster of steep hills, but occupies an elevation of its own, at a point where the river curves gracefully before it, in a crescent figure. The city, itself, of moderate dimensions at the period of which we write, is a capital; handsomely built, laid out in rectangu-

lar sections, and presenting, altogether, a view at once pleasing and promising, scanned from any of the numerous eminences which look down upon it. A place, now, of considerable opulence, and tolerably large population, it was even then distinguished by its numerous men of talent and people of fashion. Of the former, at this and subsequent periods, it has furnished to the Union abundant proofs; of the latter, the charm will be remembered with freshening interest, by all who have ever enjoyed the grace and hospitality of its society.

Upon the resources of this young and promising capital, however, it is not our purpose to dwell. We are permitted to glance at its circles only, and to detach, from the great body of the community, a few only of its members, and such of its haunts only as can but imperfectly illustrate its virtues. We proceed to introduce them.

The reader will please suppose himself for the time, within one of those dark, obscure tabernacles—sanctuaries dare we call them?—which, in the silent, narrow streets and portions of a city which are usually most secluded from the uproarious clamors of trade, have been commonly assigned to, or rather chosen by, the professors of the law, in which to carry on their mysteries in appropriate places of concealment. Like the huge spiders to which the satirist has so frequently likened them, these grave gentlemen have always exhibited a most decided preference for retreats in dismal and dusty corners. They seem to find a moral likeness for the craft in the antique, the obscure, and the intricate; and with a natural propriety! They seem to shrink, with a peculiar modesty, from the externally attractive, the open, the transparent, and the graceful; as calculated to attract too curious eyes, if not admiration; and whether it is that their veneration for the profession demands the nicest preservation of the antiquities which it so loves to enshrine and cherish, even after their uses have utterly departed, or whether it is that the wisdom which

they practise, is of the owl-like sort which will tolerate no excess of light, it is very certain that you will find them always in the most dingy and out-of-the-way dwellings, in the most dismal and obscure lanes and crannies of a city. The moral usually determines the externals. It would seem, among most of the practitioners whom it is my fortune to know, that anything like a conspicuous situation, and neat, well-fitted, and cleanlily-painted rooms, would incur the reproach of professional dandyism. These might argue, perhaps, against the profundity, the gravity, the dignity, the obscurity, of the sage professor. They might break the effect of that Burleigh nod which means so much, and is of such prodigious emphasis, so long as the shaker of the head shows nothing else, and keeps as dumb as dark! Such is the prescriptive necessity of these externals, that you will rarely happen upon the young student who will readily fall into the levities of clean lodging, decent exterior, and a modern-looking set of chambers.

The office to which we now repair, is one which evidently belongs to a veteran; one, at least, who knows what are the excellent effects upon the vulgar superstition, of the rust and dust of antiquity. If ever dirt and dismals could make any one spot more sacred than another, in the eyes of a grave and learned lawyer—who understands the full value of mere externals, and of authority upon the vulgar mind—this was the place. Here dullness was sainted; obscurity jealously insured and protected; dust consecrated to sacred uses and respect; and law preserved in maxims which it would be worse than heresy to question. Here, darkness and doubt were honored things; and mere accumulation grew into a divinity, whose chaotic treasures no one ever dreamed to distrust. Authority, here, wielding her massy tomes, as Hercules his club, craved no succor from digestion; knocking reason over with the butt of the pistol, according to Johnson, when failing to do execution from the muzzle. One breathed an atmosphere of dust at

the mere sight of these chambers: the dusty desks, dirty books, grimy walls; all inspiring solemn thoughts of the tombs of Egypt and the Assyrian, merely to behold them. The two small apartments, such as a lawyer would regard as snug, were dimly lighted by a single window in each, and these looked out upon a dismal and crowded little court. The panes of the two windows, wretchedly small as they were, had, evidently, never once, since fashioned in their frames, been opened, or subjected to the impertinent agency of soap and water. The sun grew jaundiced as he looked through the sombre glasses. Shelves of cumbrous volumes, all of that uniform vulgar complexion which distinguishes the books of a lawyer's office—a uniform as natural as drab to the quaker, white neckwrappers to the priest, and black to the devil—increased the lugubrious aspect of the apartments. Plaster casts of Coke and Bacon, and sundry other favorite authorities, stood over the book-cases, smeared with soot, and fettered with the cobwebs of three lives, or, possibly, as many generations. The rooms had little other furniture of any sort, except the huge table covered with baize, now black, which had once been green, and which also bore its century of dingy volumes. Rigid cases of painted pine occupied the niches on each side of the chimney, divided into numerous sections, each filled with its portly bundles of closely-written papers:—

"Strange words, scrawled with a barbarous pen."

In short, the picture was that of a law-office, the proprietor of which was in very active and successful practice.

But the gravity which distinguished the solemn fixtures, and the silent volumes, did not extend to the human inmates of this dim lodging-house of law. Two of these sat by the table in the centre of the room. Their feet were upon it at opposite quarters, while their chairs were thrown back and balanced upon their hind legs, at such an angle as gave most freedom and ease of position to the person

Something of merriment had inspired them, for the room was full of cachination from their rival voices, long before our entrance. Of the topics of which they spoke, the reader must form his own conjectures. They may have a significance hereafter, of which we have no present intimation. It may be well to state, however, that it is our present impression that we have somewhere met both of these persons on some previous occasion. We certainly remember that tall, slender form, that sly, smiling visage, and those huge bushy whiskers. That chuckling laugh enters into our ears like a well-remembered sound; and, as for the companion of him from whom it proceeds, we can not mistake. Every word and look is familiar. It is five years gone, indeed, but the impression was too strongly impressed to be so easily obliterated.

Our companions continued merry. The conversation was still disjointed—just enough being said to renew the laughter of both parties. As, for example:—

"Such an initiation!" said one.

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared the other, at the bare suggestion.

"And did you mark the uses made of old Darby, Warham?"

"No: I missed him before eleven. Did he not escape? Where was he?"

"Quiet as a mouse, unconscious as a pillow, under the feet of Barnabas. Barnabas used him as a sort of foot-stool. First one foot, then another, came down upon his breast; and you know the measure of Barnabas' legs. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Ha! ha! ha!"

"Hundred-pounders each, by Jupiter. Whenever they came down you could hear the squelch. Poor Darby did not seem to breathe at any other time, and the air was driven out of him with a gush. Ha! ha! ha! It was decidedly the demdest fine initiation I ever saw at the club."

"But Beauchampe!"

"Ah! that was a dangerous experiment. He can't stand the stuff."

"No, Ben, and that's not all. It will not do to put it in him, or there will be no standing him. What passions! Egad, I trembled every moment lest he should draw knife upon the pope. He's more a madman when drunk than any man I ever saw."

"He's no gain to the club. He has no idea of joking. He's too serious."

"Yet what a joke it was, when he took the pope by his nose, in order to show how a cork could be pulled without either handkerchief or corkscrew."

"Ha! ha! ha! I thought he'd have wrung it off."

"That was the pope's fear also: but he was too much afraid of provoking the madman to do worse, to make the slightest complaint, and he smiled too, with a desperate effort, while the water was trickling from his eyes."

"Ha! ha! ha!" and the chuckling was renewed, until the sound of footsteps in the front room induced their return to sobriety.

"Who's there?" demanded one of the merry companions.

"Me!—the pope," answered the voice of the intruder.

"Ha! ha! ha!" was the simultaneous effusion of the two, concluded, however, with an invitation to the other to come in.

"Come in, pope, come in."

A short, squab, but active little man, whose eyes snapped continually, and whose proboscis was of that truculent complexion and shape which invariably impresses you with the idea of an experienced bottle-holder, at once made his appearance.

"Ha! ha! ha! Your reverence, how does your dignity feel this morning—your nose, I mean?"

"Don't talk of it, Warham, I was never so insulted in all my life."

"Insulted! How? By what?"

"By what! why, by that d——d fellow pulling my nose."

"Indeed, why that was universally esteemed a compliment, and it was supposed by every one to give you pleasure, for you smiled upon him in the most gracious manner, while he was most stoutly tugging at it."

"So I did, by the ghost of Naso, but reason good was there why I should? The fellow was mad—stark mad."

"Oh, I don't think he would have done you any harm."

"Indeed, eh! don't you. By the powers, and if you have your doubts on that point, get your nasal eminence betwixt his thumb and finger, as mine was, and you will be ready enough to change your notion, before the next sitting of the Symposia. D—n it, I have no feeling in the region. It's as perfectly dead to me ever since, as if it were frozen."

"It certainly does wear a very livid appearance, eh, Ben?" remarked the other, gravely.

"Do you think so?" responded the visiter, with some signs of disquiet.

"Indeed, I do think so. Will you pass Dr. Filbert's this morning? if so, take his opinion."

"I will make it a point to do so. I will."

"It's prudent only. I have heard of several disastrous cases of the loss of the nose. Perhaps there is no feature which is so obnoxious to injury. The most fatal symptom is an obtuseness—a sort of numbness—a deficiency of sensibility."

"My very symptom."

"Amputation has been frequently resorted to, but not always in season to prevent the spread of mortification."

"The devil, you say—amputation!"

"Yes, but this is a small matter."

"What! to lose one's nose—and such a nose!"

"Yes, a small matter. Such is the progress of art that noses of any dimensions are now supplied to answer all purposes."

"Is this true, Warham? But dang it, even if it were, there's no compensating a man for the loss of his own. No nose could be made to answer my purposes half so well as the one I was born with."

"But you do not suppose that you were born with that nose."

"Why not?"

"You were born of the flesh. But that nose is decidedly more full of the spirit."

"That's an imputation. But I can tell you that a man's nose may become very red, yet he be very temperate."

"Granted. But temperance, according to the club, implies anything but abstinence. Besides, you were made perpetual pope only while your nose lasted, and color, size, and the irregular prominences by which yours is so thickly studded, were the causes of your selection. The loss of your nose itself would not be your only loss. You would be required to abdicate."

"But you are not serious, Warham, about the susceptibility of the nose to injury."

"Ask Ben!"

"It's a dem'd dangerous symptom, you have, your reverence."

"Coldness — at once a sign of disease, though latent perhaps, and of inferior capacity, for it is the distinguishing trait of cat and dog."

"And the dem'd numbness."

"Ay, the want of sensibility is a bad sign. Besides, I think the pope's nose has lost nearly all its color."

"Except a dark crimson about the roots."

"And the bridge is still *passable*."

"Yes, but how long will it be so in the club? That has grown pale also."

"To a degree, only, Ben: I don't think it much faded."

"Perhaps not; and now I look again, it does seem to me that one of the smaller carbuncles on the main prominence keeps up appearances."

"Look you, lads, d—n it, you're quizzing me!" was the sudden interruption of the person whose nose furnished the subject of discussion, but his face wore a very bewildered expression, and he evidently only had a latent idea of the waggery of which he was the victim.

"Quizzing!" exclaimed one of the companions.

"Quizzing!" echoed the other. "Never was more dem'd serious in all my life!" and he stroked his black, bushy whiskers in a very conclusive manner. The visiter applied his fingers to the nasal prominence which had become so fruitful a source of discussion, and passed them over its various outline with the tenderness of a man who handles a subject of great intrinsic delicacy.

"It feels pretty much as ever!" said he, drawing a long breath.

"Ay, to *your* fingers. But what is its own feeling? Try now and snuff the air."

The ambiguous member was put into instant exercise, and such a snuffing and snorting as followed, utterly drowned the sly chuckling in which the jeering companions occasionally indulged. They played the game, however, with marvellous command of visage.

"I can snuff—I can draw in, and drive out the air!" exclaimed the pope, with the look of a man somewhat better satisfied.

"Ay, but do you feel it cut—is it sharp—does the air seem to scrape against and burn, as it were, the nice, delicate nerves of that region."

"I can't say that it does."

"Ah! that's bad. Look you, Ben. There's a paper of snuff, yellow snuff, on the mantelpiece in t'other room. Bring it—let the pope try that."

The other disappeared, and returned, bringing with him one of those paper rolls which usually contain Sanford's preparation of bark. Nor did the appearance belie the contents. The yellow powder was bark.

"Now, pope, try that! The test is infallible, that is the strongest Scotch snuff, and if that don't succeed in titillating your nostrils, run to Filbert with all possible despatch. He may have to operate!"

The pope's hand was seen to tremble, as a portion of the powder described as so very potent, was poured into it by the confederate. He put it to his nose, and, in his haste and anxiety, fairly buried his suspected member in the powder. His cheeks shared freely in the bounty, and his mouth formed a better idea of the qualities of the "snuff," than ever could his proboscis. The application over, the patient prepared himself to sneeze, by clapping one hand upon the pit of his stomach, opening his mouth, and carefully thrusting his head forward and his nose upward.

"Oh! you're trying to sneeze!" said one of the two. "You shouldn't force the matter."

"No, I don't. But is the snuff so very strong?"

"The demdest strongest Scotch that I ever nosed yet."

"I can't sneeze!" said the pope, in accents of consternation.

His companions shook their heads dolefully. He looked from one to the other as if not knowing what to do.

"A serious matter," said one.

"Dem'd serious! There's no telling, Warham, what sort of a looking person the pope would be without his nose."

"Difficult, indeed, to imagine. A valley for a mountain! It's as if we went to bed to-night with the town at the foot of the hills, and rose to-morrow to find it on the top of them. There's nothing more important to a man's face than his nose. Appearances absolutely demand it. The uses of a nose, indeed, are really less important than its presence."

"I can't agree with you there, Warham; a sneeze—"

"Is a joy, Ben — a luxury; but a nose is a necessity. What show could a man make without a nose?"

"Rather what a show he would make of himself without it! A monstrous show!"

"You're right. Besides, the pope's loss would be greater than that of most ordinary men."

"Much, much? Let us take the dimensions, pope. Three inches from base to apex — from root to the same point — "

"Four at least — the dromedary's hump alone calls for two."

And in the spirit of unmeasured fun, the person who is called Ben by his companion, arming himself with a string, was actually about to subject the proboscis of the pope to rule and line, when the eyes of the latter, which had really exhibited some consternation before, were suddenly illuminated. He caught up the paper of supposed snuff which Ben had incautiously laid down upon the table and read the label upon it.

"Ah! villains!" he exclaimed, "at your old tricks. I should have known it. But I'll pay you," and starting up he proceeded to fling the yellow powder over the merry-makers. This led to a general scramble, over chairs and tables from one room to another. The office rang with shouts and laughter — the cries of confusion and exultation, and the tumbling of furniture. The atmosphere was filled with the floating particles of the medicine, and while the commotion was at its height, the party were joined unexpectedly by a fourth person who suddenly made his appearance from the street.

"Ha, Beauchampe! that you? You are come in time. Grapple the pope there from behind, or he will suffocate us with Jesuit's bark."

"And a proper fate for such Jesuits as ye are," exclaimed the pope, who, however, ceased the horse-play the moment

that the name of the new-comer was mentioned. He turned round and confronted him as he spoke, with a countenance in which dislike and apprehension were singularly mingled and very clearly expressed.

"Mr. Lowe, I am very glad to see you here," said Beauchampe respectfully but modestly; "it saves me the necessity of calling upon you."

"Calling upon me, sir? For what?"

"To apologize for my rudeness to you last night. I was not conscious of it, but some friends this morning tell me that I was rude."

"That you were, sir! You pulled my nose! you did!"

"I am sorry for it."

"No man's nose should be pulled, Mr. Beauchampe, without an object. If you had pulled my nose with an intention, it might have been excused; but, to pull it without design, is, it appears to me, decidedly inexcusable."

"Decidedly, decidedly!" was the united exclamation of the two friends.

"I am very sorry, indeed, Mr. Lowe. It was, sir, a very unwarrantable liberty, if I did such a thing, and I know not how to excuse it."

"It is not to be excused," said the pope, or Lowe, which was his proper name, whose indignation seemed to increase in due proportion with the meekness and humility of the young man.

"A nose," he continued, "a nose is a thing perhaps quite as sacred as any other in a man's possession."

"Quite!" said the jesters with one breath.

"No man, as I have said before, should pull the nose of another, unless he had some distinct purpose in view. Now, sir, had you any such purpose?"

"Not that I can now recollect."

"Let me assist you, Beauchampe. You had a purpose. You declared it at the time. The purpose was even a benevolent one; nay, something more than benevolent. The

corkscrew had been mislaid, and you undertook to show to the pope—remember, the presiding officer of the society—that a cork might be drawn without any other instrument than the ordinary thumb and forefinger of a free white man. You illustrated the principle on the pope's proboscis, and so effectually, that everybody was convinced, not only that the cork might be drawn in this way from every bottle, but that the same mode would be equally effectual in drawing any nose from any face. If this was not a purpose, and a laudable one, then I am no judge of the matter."

"But, Sharpe, my dear fellow," said Lowe, "you overlook the fact that Beauchampe has already admitted that he had no purpose."

"Beauchampe is no witness in his own case, nor is it asked whether he has a purpose now, but whether he had one when the deed was done."

"It was a drunken purpose then, colonel," said Beauchampe gravely.

"Drunk or sober, it matters not," said the other; "it was not less a purpose, and I say a good one. The act was one *pro bono publico;* and I, moreover, contend that you did not pull the nose of our friend except in his official capacity. You pulled the nose, not of Daniel Lowe, Esq., but of the supreme pontiff of our microcosm; and I really think that the pope does wrong to remember the event in his condition as a mere man. I am not sure that he does not violate that rule, seventeenth section, seventh clause, of the 'ordinance for the better preservation of the individuality of the fraternals,' which provides that 'all persons, members, who shall betray the discoveries, new truths, and modern inventions, the progress of discovery and proselytism, the processes deemed essential to be employed,' &c. You all remember the section, clause, and penalty."

"Pshaw! how can you make out that I violate the clause? What have I betrayed that should be secret?"

"The new mode of extracting a cork from a bottle, which

our new member, Beauchampe, displayed last evening, to the great edification of every fraternal present."

"But it was no cork! My nose—"

"Symbolically, it was a cork, and your nose had no right to any resentments. But come, let us take the back room again and resume our seats, when we can discuss the matter more at leisure."

The motion was seconded, and the dusty particles of Jesuit's bark having subsided from the atmosphere of the adjoining room, the parties drew chairs around the table as before, with a great appearance of comparative satisfaction.

CHAPTER V.

STUMP TACTICS.

"Our village politicians, how they plan
Their pushpin practice — for the rights of man!"

THE name of Beauchampe, of which our readers have heard nothing until this period, though it confers its name on our story, renders it necessary that we should devote a few moments in particular to him by whom it is borne. He was a young man, not more than twenty-one, tall, and of very handsome person. His eye was bright, and his whole face full of intelligence. His manners and features equally denoted the modesty and the ingenuousness of youth. There was a gentleness in his deportment, however, which, though natural enough to his nature when in repose, was not its characteristic at other periods. He was of excitable constitution, passionate, and full of enthusiasm; and, when aroused, not possessed of any powers of self-government or restraint. At present, and sitting with the rest about the table, his features were not only subdued and quiet, but they wore an air of profound humility and self-dissatisfaction, which was sufficiently evident to all.

"Our new member," said one of the party, "does not seem to have altogether got over the pains of initiation. Eh, Beauchampe! how is it? Does the head ache still? Are the nerves still disordered?"

"No, colonel, but I feel inexpressibly mean and sheepish. I am very sorry you persuaded me to join your club."

"Persuade! it was not possible to avoid it. Every new graduate at the bar, to be recognised, must go through the initiation. Your regrets and repentance are treasonable."

"I feel them nevertheless. I must have been a savage and a beast if what I am told be true. I never was drunk before in my life, and, club or no club, if I can help it, never will be drunk again. Indeed, I can not even now understand it. I drank no great deal of wine."

"No, indeed, precious little—no more than would dash the brandy. You may thank Ben there for his adroitness in mingling the liquors."

"I *do* thank him!" said the youth with increased gravity, and a glance which effectually contradicted his words, addressed to the offender. That worthy did not seem much annoyed, however.

"It was the demdest funny initiation I did ever see! Ha! ha! ha! I say, pope, how is your reverence's nose?"

"Let my nose alone, you grinning, big-whiskered, little creature!"

"Noses are sacred," said Sharpe.

"To be pulled only with a purpose, Warham."

"Symbolically," pursued the first.

"By way of showing how corks are to be drawn."

"Oh, d—n you for a pair of blue devils!" exclaimed Lowe, starting to his feet, and shaking his fist at the offenders.

"What, are you off, pope?" demanded Sharpe.

"Yes, I am. There's no satisfaction in staying with you."

"Call at Filbert's on your way, be sure."

"For what, I want to know?"

"Why, for his professional opinion. The worst sign, you know, is that numbness—"

"Coldness."

"Insensibility to Scotch snuff."

"And remember, though your nose was pulled officially,

it may yet be personally injured. The official pulling simply acquits the offender: the liability of the nose is not lessened by the legalization of the act of pulling."

"The devil take you for a pair of puppies," cried the victim with a queer expression of joint fun and vexation on his face. "Of course, Mr. Beauchampe," he said, turning to the young man, "of course I don't believe what these dogs say about my nose having suffered any vital injury; but I must tell you, sir, that you hurt me very much last night; and I feel the pain this morning."

"I am truly sorry, Mr. Lowe, for what I have done. Truly, sincerely sorry. I assure you, sir, that your pain of body is nothing to that which I suffer in mind from having exposed myself, as I fear I did."

"You did expose yourself and me too, sir. I trust you will never do so again. I advise you, sir, never do so again—never, unless you have a serious and sufficient motive. Don't let these fellows gull you with the idea that it was any justification for such an act that corks might be drawn from bottles in such a manner. Corks are not noses. Nobody can reasonably confound them. The shape, color, everything is different. There is nothing in the *feel* of the two to make one fancy a likeness. You are young, sir, and liable to be abused. Take the advice of an older man. Look into this matter for yourself, and you will agree with me not only that there is no likeness between a nose and a cork, but that, even admitting that your plan of drawing a cork from a bottle by the thumb and forefinger is a good one, it would be impossible to teach the process by exercising them upon a nose in the same manner. These young men are making fun of you, Mr. Beauchampe—they are, believe me!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared the offenders. "Very good, your reverence."

"He! he! he! you puppies. Do you think I mind your cackling!" and shaking his fist at the company, Mr. Lowe

took his departure, involuntarily stroking, with increased affection the nasal eminence which had furnished occasion for so much misplaced merriment.

"Well, Beauchampe," said one of the companions, "you still seem grave about this business, but you should not. If ever a man may forget himself and be mad for a night, after the fashion of old Anacreon, it is surely the night of that day when he is admitted to the temple—when he takes his degree, and passes into the brotherhood of the bar."

"Nay, on such a day least of all."

"Pshaw, you were never born for a puritan. Old Thurston, your parson teacher, has perverted you from your better nature. You are a fellow for fun and flash, high frolic, and the complete abandonment of blood. You look at this matter too seriously. Do I not tell you—I that have led you through all the thorny paths of legal knowledge—do I not tell you that your offence is venial. 'A good sherris-sack hath a twofold operation in it.'"

"Beauchampe found it fourfold," said the bush-whiskered gentleman—"that is, fourth proof; and he showed proofs enough of it. By Gad! never did a man play such pleasant deviltries with his neighbor's members. The nose-pulling was only a small part of his operations. It was certainly a most lovely initiation."

"At least it's all over, Mr. Coalter; and as matters have turned out, nothing more need be said on the subject; but were it otherwise, I assure you that your practice upon my wine would be a dangerous experiment for you. I speak to you by way of warning, and not with the view to quarrel. I presume you meant nothing more than a jest?"

"Dem the bit more," said the other, half dissatisfied with himself at the concession, yet more than half convinced of the propriety of making it. "Dem the bit more. Sharpe will tell you that it's a trick of the game—a customary trick—must be done by somebody, and was done by me, only because I like to see a dem'd fine initiation such as

yours was, my boy. But, good morning, Beauchampe—good morning, Sharpe—I see you have business to do—some dem'd political business, I suppose; and so I leave you. I'm no politician, but I see that Judge Tompkins is in the field against your friend Desha. Eh! don't you think I can guess the rest, Warham—eh?"

"Sagacious fellow!" said Sharpe as the other disappeared; "and, in this particular, not far from the mark. Tompkins is in the field against Desha, and will run him a tight race. I too must go into the field, Beauchampe. The party requires it, and though I have some reasons not to wish it just at this time, yet the matter is scarcely avoidable. I shall want every assistance, and I shall expect you to take the stump for me."

"Whatever I can do I will."

"You can do much. You do not know your own abilities on the stump. You will do famous things yet; and this is the time to try yourself. The success of a man in our country depends on the first figure. You are just admitted; something is expected of you. There can be no better opportunity to begin."

"I am ready and willing."

"Scarcely, *mon ami*. You are going to Simpson. You will get with sisters and mamma, and waste the daylight. Believe me this is no time to play at mammets. We want every man. We will need them all."

"You shall find me ready. I shall not stay long at Simpson. But do not think that I will commit myself for Desha. I prefer Tompkins."

"Well, but you will do nothing on that subject. You do not mean to come out for Tompkins?"

"No! I only tell you I will do nothing on the subject of the gubernatorial canvass. You are for the assembly. I will turn out in your behalf. But who is your opponent?"

"One Calvert—William Calvert. Said to be a smart fellow. I never saw him, but he is spoken of as no mean

person. He writes well. His letter to the people of —— lies on the desk there. Put it in your pocket and read it at your leisure. It is well done—quite artful—but rather prosing and puritanical."

Beauchampe took up the pamphlet, passed his eyes over the page, and placed it without remark in his pocket.

"Barnabas," continued Sharpe, "who has seen this fellow Calvert, says he's not to be despised. He's a mere country lawyer, however, who is not known out of his own precinct. In taking the field now, he makes a miscalculation. I shall beat him very decidedly. But he has friends at work, who are able, and mine must not sleep. Do I understand you as promising to take the field against him?"

"If he is so clever, he will need a stronger opponent. Why not do it yourself?"

"Surely, I will. I long for nothing better. But I can not be everywhere, and he and his friends are everywhere busy. I will seek him in his stronghold, and grapple with him tooth and nail; but there will be auxiliary combatants, and you must be ready to take up the cudgel at the same time with some other antagonist. When do you leave town?"

"To-day—within the hour."

"So soon! Why I looked to have you to dinner. Mrs Sharpe expects you."

"I am sorry to deprive myself of the pleasure of doing justice to her good things; but I wrote my sisters and they will expect me."

"Pshaw! what of that! The disappointment of a day only. You will be the more welcome from the delay."

"They will apprehend some misfortune—perhaps, my rejection—and I would spare them the mortification if not the fear. You must make my compliments and excuse to Mrs. S."

"You *will* be a boy, Beauchampe. Let the girls wait a day, and dine with me. You will meet some good fellows

and get a glimpse into the field of war—see how we open the campaign, and so forth."

"Temptations, surely, not to be despised; but I confess to my boyhood in one respect, and will prove my manhood in another. I am able to resist your temptations—so much for my manhood. My boyhood makes me keep word with my sisters, and the shame be on my head."

"Shame, indeed; but where shall we meet?"

"At Bowling Green—when you please."

"Enough then on that head. I will write you when you are wanted. I confess to a strong desire, apart from my own interests, to see you on the stump; and if I can arrange it so, I will have you break ground against Calvert."

"But that is not so easy. What is there against him?"

"You will find out from his pamphlet. Nothing more easy. He is obscure, that is certain. Little known among the people. Why? For a good reason—he is a haughty aristocrat—a man who only knows them when he wants their votes!"

"Is that the case?"

"Simple fellow! we must make it appear so. It may be or not—what matter? That he is shy, and reserved, and unknown, is certain. It's just as likely he is so, because of his pride, as anything else. Perhaps he's a fellow of delicate feelings! This is better for us, if you can make it appear so. People don't like fellows of very delicate feelings. That alone would be conclusive against him. If we could persuade him to wear silk gloves, now, it would be only necessary to point them out on the canvass, to turn the stomachs of the electors, and their votes with their stomachs. They would throw him up instantly.

Beauchampe shook his head. The other interpreted the motion incorrectly.

"What! you do not believe it. Never doubt. The fact is certain. Such would be the case. Did you ever hear the story of Barnabas in his first campaign?"

"No!—not that I recollect."

"He was stumping it through your own county of Simpson. There were two candidates against him. One of them stood no chance. That was certain. The other, however, was generally considered to be quite as strong if not stronger than Barnabas. Now Barnabas, in those days, was something of a dandy. He wore fine clothes, a long-tail blue, a steeple-crowned beaver, and silk-gloves. Old Ben Jones, his uncle, saw him going out on the canvass in this unseasonable trim; told him he was a d——d fool; that the very coat, and gloves, and hat, would lose him the election. 'Come in with me,' said the old buck. He did so, and Jones rigged him out in a suit of buckskin breeches; gave him an old slouch tied with a piece of twine; made him put on a common homespun roundabout; and sent him on the campaign with these accoutrements."

"A mortifying exchange to Barnabas."

"Not a bit. The fellow was so eager for election, that he'd have gone without clothes at all, sooner than have missed a vote. But one thing the old man did not remember—the silk-gloves—and Barnabas had nearly reached the muster-ground before he recollected that he had them on his hands. He took 'em off instantly, and thrust 'em into his pocket. When he reached the ground, he soon discovered the wisdom of old Jones's proceedings. He was introduced to his chief opponent, and never was there a more rough-and-tumble-looking ruffian under the sun. Barnabas swears that he had not washed his face and hands for a week. His coat was out at the elbows, and though made of cloth originally both blue and good, it was evidently not made for the present wearer. His breeches were common homespun; and his shoes, of yellow-belly, were gaping on both feet. He had on stockings, however. Barnabas looked and felt quite genteel alongside of him; but he felt his danger also. He saw that the appearance of the fellow was very much in his favor. There was al-

ready a crowd around him; and, when he talked, his words were of that rough sort which is supposed to indicate the true staple of popular independence. As there was nothing much in favor or against any of the candidates, unless it was that one of them—not Barnabas—was suspected of horse-stealing, all that the speakers could do was to prove their own republicanism, and the aristocracy of the opponent. Appearances would help or dissipate this charge; and Barnabas saw, shabby as he was, that his rival was still shabbier. A bright thought took him that night. Fumbling in his pockets while they were drinking at the hotel, he felt his silk-gloves. What does he do, but, going to his room, he takes out his pocket inkstand and pen, and marks in large letters the initials of his opponent upon them. This done, he watches his chance, and the next morning when they were about to go forth to the place of gathering, he slips the gloves very slyly into the other fellow's pocket. The thing worked admirably. In the midst of the speech, Joel Peguay—for that was his rival's name—endeavoring to pull out a ragged cotton pocket-handkerchief, drew out the gloves, which fell behind him on the ground. Barnabas was on the watch, and, pointing the eyes of the assembly to the tokens of aristocracy, exclaimed—

"'This, gentlemen, is a proof of the sort of democracy which Joel Peguay *practises*.'

"A universal shout, mixed with hisses, arose. Peguay looked round, and, when he was told what was the matter, answered with sufficient promptness, and a look of extraordinary exultation:—

"'Fellow-citizens, ain't this only another proof of the truth of what I'm a-telling you?—for, look you, them nasty fine things come out of this coat-pocket, did they?'

"'Yes, yes! we saw them drop, Joel,' was the cry from fifty voices.

"'Very good,' said Joel, nowise discomfited, 'and the

coat was borrowed, for this same occasion, from Tom Meadows. I hain't a decent coat of my own, my friends, to come before you—none but a round jacket, and that's tore down in the back—and so, you see, I begged Tom Meadows for the loan of his'n, and I reckon the gloves must be his'n too, since they fell out of the pocket.'

"This explanation called for a triumphant shout from the friends of Peguay, and the affair promised to redound still more in favor of the speaker, when Barnabas, shaking his head gravely, and picking up the gloves, which he held from him as if they had been saturated in the dews of the bohon upas, drew the eyes of those immediately at hand to the letters which they bore.

"'I am sorry,' said he, 'to interrupt the gentleman; but there is certainly some mistake here. These gloves are marked J. P., which stands for Joel Peguay, and not Tom Meadows. See for yourselves, gentlemen—you all can read, I know—here's J. P. I'm not much of a reader, being too poor to have much of an education; but I know pretty much what you all do, that if these gloves belonged to Tom Meadows, they would have been marked T. M.: the T for Tom, and the M for Meadows. I don't mean to say that they are not Tom's; but I do say that it's very strange that Tom Meadows should write his name Joel Peguay. I say it's strange, gentlemen—very strange—that's all!'

"And that was enough. There was no more shouting from the friends of Peguay. He was completely confounded. He denied and disputed, of course; but the proofs were too strong, and Barnabas had done his part of the business with great skill and adroitness. Joel Peguay descended from the stump, swearing vengeance against Meadows, who, he took for granted, had contrived the exhibition secretly, only to defeat him. No doubt a fierce feud followed between the parties, but Barnabas was elected by a triumphant vote."

"And do you really think, colonel," said Beauchampe, "that this silly proceeding had any effect in producing the result?"

"Silly, indeed! By my soul, such silly things, Master Beauchampe, have upset empires. The tumbling of an old maid's cap has done more mischief. I can tell you, from my own experience, that a small matter like this has turned the scale in many a popular election. Barnabas believes to this day that he owes his success entirely to that little *ruse de guerre*."

"I know not how to believe it."

"Because you know not yet that little, strange, mousing, tiger-like, capricious, obstinate, foolish animal, whom we call man. When you know him more, you will wonder less."

"Perhaps so," said Beauchampe. "At all events, I can only say that, while I will turn out for you and do all I can to secure your election as in duty bound, I will endeavor to urge your claims on other grounds."

"As you please, my good fellow. Convince them that I am a patriot, and a prophet, and the best man for them, and I care nothing by what process it is done. And if you can lay bare the corresponding deficiencies of mine opponent—this fellow Calvert—it is a part of the same policy, to be sure."

"But not so obviously," replied the other, "for as yet, you remember, we know nothing of him, and can not accordingly pronounce upon his deficiencies."

"You forget—his aristocracy!"

"Ah! that is conjectural, you know."

"Granted," said the other, "but what more do you want? A plausible conjecture is the very sort of argument in a popular election."

"But scarcely an honorable one."

"Honorable! poh! poh! poh! Old Thurston has seriously diseased you, Beauchampe. We must undertake

your treatment for this weakness—this boyish weakness. It is a boyish weakness, Beauchampe."

"Perhaps so, but it makes my strength."

"It will always keep you feeble—certainly keep you down in the political world."

The young man smiled. The other, speaking hastily, continued:—

"But this need not be discussed at present. Enough that you will take the field, and be ready at my summons. Turn the state of parties in your mind, and that will give you matter enough for the stump. Read that letter of Calvert; I doubt not it will give you more than sufficient material. From a hasty glance, I see that he distrusts the people; *that*, as a stern democrat, you can resent happily. I leave that point to you. You will regard that opinion as a falsehood; I think it worse—a mistake in policy. It is to this same people that he addresses his claims. How far his opinion is an impertinence may be seen in his appeal to the very judgment which he decries. This, to my mind, is conclusive against his own. But this must not make us remiss. I will write to you when the time comes, and at intervals, should there be anything new to communicate. But you had better stay to dinner. Seriously, my wife expects you."

"Excuse me to her—but I must go. I so long to see my sisters, and they will be on the lookout for me. I have already written them."

With a few words more, and the young lawyer separated from his late legal preceptor. When he was gone, the latter stroked his chin complacently as he soliloquized:—

"He will do to break ground with this fellow Calvert. He is ardent, soon roused; and if I am to judge of Calvert from his letter, he is a stubborn colt, whose heels are very apt to annoy any injudicious assailant. Ten to one, that, with his fiery nature, Beauchampe finds cause of quarrel in any homely truth. They may fight, and this hurts me

nothing. At least, Beauchampe may be a very good foil for the first strokes of this new enemy. Barbanas says he is to be feared. If so, he must be grappled with fearlessly. There is no hope else. At all events, I will see, by his issue with Beauchampe, of what stuff he is made. Something in that. And yet, is all so sure with this boy? He has his whims; is sometimes suspicious; obstinate as a mule when roused; and has some ridiculous notions about virtue, and all that sort of thing. At least, he must be managed cautiously—very cautiously!"

We leave the office of Colonel Warham P. Sharpe for a while, to attend the progress of the young man of whom he was speaking.

CHAPTER VI.

BEAUCHAMPE AT HOME.

BEAUCHAMPE was on his way to the maternal mansion. We have already endeavored to afford the reader some idea of the character of this person. It does not need that we should dilate more at large on the abstract constituents of his nature. We may infer that his mind was good, from the anxiety which his late teacher displayed to have it put in requisition in his behalf during the political campaign which was at hand. The estimate of his temperament by the same person will also be sufficient for us. That he was of high, manly bearing, and honorable purpose, we may also conclude from the share which he took in the preceding dialogue.

Of his judgment, however, doubts may be entertained. With something more than the ardor of youth, Beauchampe had all of its impatience. He was of that fiery mood, when aroused, which too effectually blinds the possessor to the strict course of propriety. His natural good sense was but too often baffled by this impetuosity of his temper; and, though in the brief scene in which he has been suffered to appear, we have beheld nothing in his deportment which was not becomingly modest and deliberate, we are constrained to confess that the characteristic of much deliberation is not natural to him, and was induced, in the present instance, by a sense of his late elevation to a new and ex-

acting profession; the fact that he was in the presence of his late teacher; and that he had, the night before, participated, however unconsciously, in a debauch, of the performances of which he was really most heartily ashamed. His manner has therefore been subdued, but only for a while. We shall see him before long under very different aspects; betraying all the ardor and impetuosity of his disposition, and, as is usual in such cases, not always in that way which is most favorable to the shows of judgment.

Beauchampe was the second son of a stanch Kentucky farmer. He had received quite as good an education as the resources of the country at that time could afford. This education was not very remarkable, it is true; but, with the advantage of a lively nature and retentive memory, it brought into early exercise all the qualities of his really excellent intellect. He became a good English speaker, and a tolerable Latin scholar. He read with avidity, and studied with industry; and, at the age of twenty-one, was admitted to the practice of law in the courts of the state. This probation over, with the natural feeling of a heart which the world has not yet utterly weaned from the affections and dependencies of its youth, he was hurrying home to his mother and sisters, to receive their congratulations, and share with them the pride and delight which such an occasion of his return would naturally inspire.

Hitherto, his mother and sisters have had all his affections. The blind deity has never disturbed his repose, diverted his eyes from these objects of his regard, or interfered with his mental cogitations. Dreams of ambition were in his mind, but not yet with sufficient strength or warmth as to subdue the claims of that domestic love which the kindnesses of a beloved mother, and the attachments of dear sisters, had impressed upon his heart. He had his images of beauty, perhaps, along with his images of glory, but they were rather the creations of a lively fancy, in moments of

mental abstraction, than any more real impressions upon the unwritten tablets of his soul.

These were still fair and smooth. His life had not been touched by many griefs or annoyances. His trials had been few, his mortifications brief. He was not yet conscious of any wants which would induce feelings of care and anxiety; and, with a spirit gradually growing lighter and more elastic, as the number of miles rapidly diminished beneath the feet of his horse, he forgot that he was alone in his journeyings; a light heart and a lively fancy brought him pleasant companions enough, that beguiled the time, and cheered the tediousness of his journey. The youth was thinking of his home—and what a thought is that in the bosom of youth! The old cottage shrunk up in snug littleness among the venerable guardian trees, and the green grass-plat and the half-blind house-dog, and a thousand objects besides, forced themselves, through the medium of his memory, upon his delighted imagination. Then he beheld his sisters hurrying out to meet him—Jane running for dear life, half mad, and shouting back to Mary, the more grave sister, who slowly followed. Jane shrieking with laughter, and Mary with not a word, but only her extended hand and her tears!

Strange! that even at such a moment as this, while these were the satisfying images in his mind, there should intrude another which should either expel these utterly, or should persuade him that they were not enough to satisfy his mind or confer happiness upon his heart. Why, when, in his dreaming fancy, these dear sisters appeared so lovely and were so fond, why should another form—itself a fancy—arise in the midst, which should make him heedless and forgetful of all others, and fixed only on itself! The eye of the youth grew sadder as he gazed and felt. He no longer spurred his steed impatiently along the path, but, forgetful in an instant of his progress, he mused upon the heart's ideal, which a passing fancy had presented, and

all the bright sweet domestic forms vanished from his sight.

The feeling of Beauchampe was natural enough. He felt it to be so. It was an instinct which every heart of any sensibility must feel in progress of time; even though the living object be yet wanting to the sight, upon which the imagination may expend its own colors in seeking to establish the identity between the *sought* and the *found*.

But was it not late for him to feel this instinct for the first time? Why had he not felt it before? Why, just at that moment—just when his fancy had invoked around him all the images which had ever brought him happiness before—forms which had supplied all his previous wants—smiles and tones which had left nothing which he could desire—why, just then, should that foreign instinct arise and expel, as with a single glance, the whole family of joys known to his youthful heart. Expelling them, indeed, but only to awaken him to the conviction of superior joys and possessions far more valuable.

It was an instinct, indeed; and never was youthful mind so completely diverted, in a single instant, from the consideration of a long succession of dear thoughts, to that of one, now dearer perhaps than all, but which had never made one of his thoughts before.

He now remembered that, of all his schoolmates and youthful associates, there had not been one, who had not professed a passionate flame for some smiling damsel in his neighborhood. Among his brother students-at-law, that they should love was quite as certain as that they should have frequent attacks of the passion, and of course, on each occasion, for some different object.

He alone had gone unscathed. He alone had run the gauntlet of smiles and glances, bright eyes and lovely cheeks, without detriment. The thought had never disturbed him then, when he was surrounded by beauty; why should it now, when no apparent object of passion was nigh

him, and when but a small distance from his mother's farm he had every reason to think only of that and the dear relatives which there awaited him? There was a fatality in it!

At that moment he was roused from his reveries by a pistol-shot which sounded in the wood a little distance before him.

The circumstance was a singular one. The wood was very close and somewhat extensive. He knew the spot very well. It was scarcely more than a mile from his mother's cottage. He knew of no one in the neighborhood who practised pistol-shooting; but, on this head, he was not capable to judge. He had been absent from his home for two years. There might—there must have been changes. At all events no mischief seemed to be afoot. There was but one shot. He himself was safe, and he rode forward, relieved somewhat of his reveries, at a trifling increase of speed.

The road led him round the wood in which the shot had been heard, making a sweep like a crescent, in order to avoid some rugged inequalities of the land. As he followed its windings he was suddenly startled to see, just before him, a female, well-dressed, tall, and of a carriage unusually firm and majestic. Under her arm she carried a small bundle wrapped up in a dark silk pocket-handkerchief.

She crossed the road hastily, and soon buried herself out of sight in the woods opposite. She gave him but a single glance in passing, but this glance enabled him to distinguish features of peculiar brilliancy and beauty. The moment after, she was gone from sight, and it seemed as if the pathway grew suddenly dark. Her sudden appearance and rapid transition was like that of a gleam of summer lightning.

Involuntarily he spurred his horse forward, and his eyes peered keenly into the wood which she had entered. He could still see the white glimmer of her garments. He

stopped, like one bewildered, to watch. At one moment he felt like dismounting and darting in pursuit of her. But such impertinence might receive the rebuke which it merited. She did not seem to need any service, and on no other pretence could he have pursued.

He grew more and more bewildered while he gazed, and mused upon the incident. This vision was so strange and startling; and so singularly in unison with the fancies which had just before possessed his mind. That his heart should now, for the first time, present him with an ideal form of attraction and delight, and that, a moment after, a form of beauty should appear, so unexpectedly, in so unusual a place, was at least a very strange coincidence.

Nothing could be more natural than that the fancy of the young man should find these two forms identical. It is an easy matter for the ardent nature to deceive itself. But here another subject of doubt presented itself to the mind of Beauchampe. Was this last vision more certainly real than the former? It was no longer to be seen. Had he seen it except in his mind's eye, where the former bright ideal had been called up? So sudden had been the appearance, so rapid the transition, that he turned from the spot now half doubting its reality. Slowly he rode away, musing strangely, and we may add sadly—often looking back, and growing more and more bewildered as he mused, until relieved and diverted by the more natural feelings of the son and brother, as, the prospect opening before his eyes, he beheld the farmstead of his mother.

In the doorway of the old cottage stood the venerable woman, while the two girls were approaching, precisely as his fancy had shown them, the one bounding and crying aloud, the other moving slowly, and with eyes which were already moist with tears. They had seen him before he had sufficiently awakened from his reveries to behold them.

"Ah, Jane—dear Mary!" were the words of the youth, throwing himself from the horse and severally clasping

them in his arms. The former laughed, sang, danced, and capered. The latter clung to the neck of her brother, sobbing as heartily as if they were about to separate.

"Why, what's Mary crying for, I wonder?" said the giddy girl.

"Because my heart's so full, I must cry," murmured the other. Taking an arm of each in his own, Beauchampe led them to the old lady, whose crowning embrace was bestowed with the warmth of one who clasps and confesses the presence of her idol.

We pass over the first ebullitions of domestic love. Most people can imagine these. It is enough to say that ours is a family of love. They have been piously brought up. Mrs. Beauchampe is a woman of equal benignity and intelligence. They have their own little world of joy in and among themselves. The daughters are single-hearted and gentle, and no small vanities and petty strifes interfere to diminish the confidence in one, and another, and themselves, which brings to them the hourly enjoyment of the all-in-all content. It will not be hard to fancy the happiness of the household in the restoration of its tall and accomplished son—tall and handsome, and so kind, and so intelligent, and just now made a lawyer too! Jane was half beside herself, and Mary's tears were constantly renewed as they looked at the manly brother, and thought of these things.

"But why did you ride so slow, Orville?" demanded Jane, as she sat upon his knee and patted his cheek. Mary was playing with his hair from behind. "You came at a snail's pace, and didn't seem to see anybody; and there was I hallooing to make you hear, and all for nothing."

"Don't worry Orville with your questions, Jane," said the more sedate Mary. "He was tired, perhaps—"

"Or *his* heart was too full also," said Jane, interrupting her mischievously. "But it's not either of these, I'm sure, Orville, for I know horseback don't tire you, and I'm sure your heart's not so very full, for you hav'n't shed a tear

yet. No, no! it's something else, for you not only rode slow, but you kept looking behind you all the while, as if you were expecting somebody. Now, who were you looking for? Tell me, tell Jane, dear brother!"

Now you hit it, Jane! The reason I rode slowly and looked behind me—mind me, I rode pretty fast until I came almost in sight of home—was, because I *did* expect to see some one coming behind me, though I had not much cause to expect it either."

"Who was it?"

"That's the question. Perhaps you can tell *me;*" and, with these words, the young man proceeded to relate the circumstance, already described, of the sudden advent of that bright vision which had so singularly taken the place, in our hero's mind, of his heart's ideal.

"It must be Miss Cooke, mother," said the girls with one breath.

"And who is Miss Cooke?"

"Oh! that's the mystery. She's a sort of queen, I'm thinking," said Jane, "or she wants you to think her one, which is more likely."

"Jane! Jane!" said Mary, who was the younger sister, in reproachful accents.

"Well, what am I saying, but what's the truth? Don't she carry herself like a queen? Isn't she as proud and stately as if she was better than anybody else?"

"If she's a queen, it's a tragedy-queen," said the graver sister. "I don't deny that she's very stately, but then I'm sure she's also very unhappy."

"I don't believe in her unhappiness at all. I can't think any person so very unhappy who carries herself so proudly."

"Pride itself may be a cause of unhappiness, Jane," said the mother.

"Yes, mamma, but are we to sympathize with it, I want to know?"

"Perhaps! It is not less to be pitied because the owner has no such notion. But your brother is waiting to hear something of Miss Cooke, and, instead of telling him *who* she is, you're telling him *what* she is."

"And no better way, perhaps," said the brother. "But do you tell me, Mary: Jane is quite too much given to scandal."

"Oh, brother!" said Jane.

"Too true, Jane; but go on, Mary, and let us have a key to this mystery. Who is Miss Cooke?"

"She's a young lady—"

"Very pretty?"

"Very! She came here about two years ago—just after you went from Parson Thurston to study law—she and her mother, and they took the old place of Farmer Davis. They came from some other part of Simpson, so I have heard, and bought this place from Widow Davis. They have a few servants, and are comfortably fixed; and Mrs. Cooke is quite a chatty body, very silly in some things, but fond of going about among the neighbors. Her daughter, who is named Anna, though I once heard the old lady call her Margaret—"

"Margaret Anna, perhaps—she may have two names," said the brother.

"Very likely; but the daughter is not sociable. On the contrary, she rather avoids everybody. You do not often see her when you go there, and she has never been here but once, and that shortly after her first arrival. As Jane says, she is not only shy, but stately. Jane thinks it pride, but I do not agree with her. I rather think that it is owing to a natural dignity of mind, and to manners formed under other circumstances; for she never smiles, and there is such a deep look of sadness about her eyes, that I can't help believing her to be very unhappy. I sometimes think that she has probably been disappointed in love."

"Yes, Mary thinks the strangest things about her. She

says she's sure that she's been engaged, and that her lover has played her false, and deserted her."

"Oh, Jane, you mistake; I said I thought he might have been killed in a duel, or—"

"Or that he deserted her; for that matter, Mary, you've been having a hundred conceits about her ever since she came here."

"She is pretty, you say, Mary?" asked the young man, who by this time had ejected Jane from his knee, and transferred her younger sister to the same place.

"Pretty? she is beautiful."

"I can't see it for my part," said Jane, "with her solemn visage, and great dark eyes, that seem always sharp like daggers ready to run you through."

"She is beautiful, brother, very beautiful, but Jane don't like her because she thinks her proud. She's as beautiful in her face as she is noble in her figure. Her stateliness, indeed, arises, I think, from the symmetry and perfect proportion of her person; for when she moves, she does not seem to be at all conscious that she is stately. Her movements are very natural, as if she had practised them all her life. And they say, mother, that she's very smart."

"Who says, sister?" cried Jane—"who but old Mrs. Fisher, and only because she saw her fixing a bushel of books upon the shelves at her first coming!"

"No, Jane; Judge Crump told me that he spoke to her, and that he had never believed a woman could be so sensible till then."

"That shows he's a poor judge. Who'd take old Crump's opinion about a woman's sense? I'm sure I wouldn't."

"But Miss Cooke *is* very sensible, brother. Jane does dislike her so!"

"Well, supposing she is sensible, it's only what she ought to be by this time. She's old enough to have the sense of two young women at least."

"Old!" exclaimed Beauchampe. "The lady I saw was not old, certainly."

The suggestion seemed to give the young man some annoyance, which the gentle-hearted Mary hastened to remove.

"She is *not* old, Orville. Jane, how can you say so? You know that Miss Cooke can hardly be over twenty-one or two, even if she's that."

"Well, and ain't that old? You, Mary, are sixteen only, and I'm but seventeen and three months. But I'm certain she's twenty-five if she's a day."

The subject is one fruitful of discussion where ladies are concerned. Beauchampe, having experience of the two sisters, quietly sat and listened; and, by the use of a moderate degree of patience, soon contrived to learn all that could be known of that neighbor who, it appears, had occasioned quite as great a sensation in the bosoms of the sisters, though of a very different sort, as her momentary presence had inspired in his own. The two girls, representing extremes, were just the persons to give him a reasonable idea of the real facts in the case of the person under discussion. It may be unnecessary to add that the result was, to increase the mystery, and heighten the curiosity which the young man now felt in its solution.

CHAPTER VII.

PROGRESS OF DISCOVERY.

When the first sensations following the return of our hero to his home and family had somewhat subsided, the enthusiastic and excitable nature of the former naturally led him to dwell upon the image of that strange lady, whose sudden appearance seemed to harmonize so singularly with the ideal of his waking dream. The very morning after his arrival, he sallied forth at an early hour, with his gun in hand, ostensibly with a view to birding, but really to catch some glimpse of the mysterious person. For this purpose, as all the neighborhood and neighboring county was familiar to him, he traversed the hundred routes to and from the farmstead of old Davis, which the stranger now occupied, and wasted some precious hours, in which neither his heart nor his gun found game, in exploring the deep wood whence the pistol-shot, the day before, had first challenged his attention.

But no bright vision blessed his search that day. He found nothing to interest his mind or satisfy his curiosity, unless it were a tree which he discovered barked with bullets, where some person had evidently been exercising, and —assuming the instrument to have been a pistol—with a singular degree of success. The discovery did not call for the thought of a single moment; and, contenting himself with the conjecture that some young rifleman was thus

"teaching the young idea how to shoot," he turned off, and, with some weariness, and more disappointment, made his way, birdless, to his cottage.

But the disappointment rather increased than lessened his curiosity; and, before two days had passed, he had acquired boldness enough to advance so nearly to the dwelling of Miss Cooke, as, sheltered beneath some friendly shade-trees, to see the passers by the window, and on one or more occasions to catch a glimpse of the one object for whom all these pains were taken.

These glimpses, it may be said, served rather to inflame than to satisfy his curiosity. He saw enough to convince him that Mary was right, and Jane wrong; that he was not deceived in his first impression of the exceeding loveliness of the mysterious stranger; that she was beautiful beyond any comparison that he could make—of a rare, rich, and excelling beauty: and slowly he returned from his wanderings, to muse upon the means by which he should arrive at a more intimate knowledge of the fair one, who was represented to be as inaccessible as she was fair—like one of those unhappy damsels of whom we read in old romances, locked up in barred and gloomy towers, lofty and well guarded, whose charms, if they were the incentives to chivalry and daring, were quite as often the cruel occasion of bloody strife and most unfortunate adventure.

The surpassing beauty of our heroine, so strangely coupled with her sternness of deportment and loneliness of habit, naturally enough brought into activity the wild imagination and fervent temperament of our young lawyer. By these means her beauty was heightened, and the mystery which enveloped her was made the parent of newer sources of attraction. Before three days had passed, his sisters had discovered that his thought was running only on their fair, strange neighbor; and at length, baffled in his efforts to encounter the mysterious lady in his rambles, he was fain to declare himself more openly at home, and to insist that

his sisters should call upon Miss Cooke and her mother, and invite them to tea.

This was done accordingly, but with only partial success. Mrs. Cooke came, but not the daughter, who sent an excuse. Beauchampe paid his court to the old lady, whom he found very garrulous and very feeble-minded; but though she spoke with great freedom on almost every other subject, he remarked that she shrunk suddenly into silence whenever reference was made to her daughter.

On this point everything tended to increase the mystery, and, of course, the interest. He attended the mother home that night, in the hope to be permitted to see the daughter; but though, when invited to enter, he did so, he found the *tête-à-tête* with the old lady — a half-hour which curiosity readily gave to dullness — unrelieved by the presence of the one object for whom he sought. But a well-filled bookcase, which met his eyes in the hall, suggested to him a mode of approach in future of which he did not scruple to avail himself. He complimented the old lady on the extent of her literary possessions. Such a collection was not usual at that time among the country-houses of that region. He spoke of his passion for books, and how much he would be pleased to be permitted to obtain such as he wanted from the collection before him.

The old lady replied that they were her daughter's, who was also passionately fond of books; that she valued her collection very highly — they were almost her only friends — but she had no doubt that Mr. Beauchampe would readily receive her permission to take any that he desired for perusal.

Beauchampe expressed his gratitude, but judiciously declined to make his selection that night. The permission necessarily furnished the sanction for a second visit, for which he accordingly prepared himself. He suffered a day, however, to pass — a forbearance that called for the exercise of no small degree of fortitude — before repeating his

visit. The second morning, however, he went. He saw the young lady, for a brief instant, at the window, while making his approaches—but that was all! He was admitted, was received by the mother, treated with great kindness, and spent a full hour—how we say not—in company with the venerable and voluble dame. She accorded him the permission of her daughter to use any book in the collection, but the daughter herself did not appear. He mustered courage enough to ask for her, but the inquiry was civilly evaded. He was finally compelled, after lingering to the last, and hoping against hope, to take his departure without attaining the real object of his visit. He selected a volume, however, not that he cared to read it, but simply because the necessity of returning it would afford him the occasion and excuse for another visit.

The proverb tells us that grass never grows beneath the footsteps of true love. It is seldom suffered to grow beneath those of curiosity. Our hero either read, or pretended to have read, the borrowed volume, in a very short space of time. The next morning found him with it beneath his arm, and on his way to the cottage of the Cookes. The grave looks of his mother, and the sly looks of his sisters, were all lost upon him; and, pluming himself somewhat upon the adroitness which disguised the real purpose of his visits, he flattered himself that he should still attain the object which he sought, without betraying the interest which he felt.

Of course, he himself did not suspect the real motives by which he was governed. That a secret passion stirring in his breast had anything to do with that interest which he felt to know the strange lady, was by no means obvious to his own mind.

Whatever may have been the motive by which his conduct was influenced, it did not promise to be followed by any of the results which he desired. His second morning-call was not more fortunate than the first. Approaching,

he saw the outline of Miss Cooke's person at an upper window, but she instantly disappeared; and he was received below, and wholly entertained, by the good old mother.

It may readily be imagined that, with a fervent, passionate nature, such as Beauchampe's, this very baffling of his desires was calculated to stimulate and strengthen them. He was a man of equally strong impulses and indomitable will. The necessary creature of such qualities of mind is a puritan tenacity of purpose—a persevering energy, which ceases altogether, finally, to sleep in the work of conquest; or, at least, converts even its sleeping hours into tasks of thought, and wild, vague dreams of modes and operations, by which the work of conquest is to be carried on. The momentary glimpses of the damsel's person, which the ardent youth was permitted to obtain, still kept alive in his mind the strong impression which her beauty had originally made. We do not insinuate that this exhibition was designed by the lady herself for any such object. Such might be the imputation—nay, was, in after-days, by some of her charitable neighbors—but we have every reason for thinking otherwise. We believe that she was originally quite sincere in her desire to avoid the sight and discourage the visits of strangers. Whether this was also the desire of the mother, is not so very certain. We should suppose, on the contrary, that the course of her daughter was one that afforded little real satisfaction to her. If the daughter remained inflexible, the good mother soon convinced Beauchampe that she was not; and, saving the one topic—the daughter herself—there was none upon which good Mrs. Cooke did not expatiate to her visiter with the assured freedoms of a friend of a thousand years. Any approach to *this* subject, however, effectually silenced her: not, it would seem, because she herself felt any repugnance to the subject—for Beauchampe could not fail to perceive that her eyes brightened whenever the daughter was referred to—but her voice was hurried when she replied on such

occasions, and her glance stealthily turned to the entrance, as if she dreaded lest the sound should summon other ears to the apartment.

The curiosity of Beauchampe was further stimulated by a general examination of the contents of the library. The selection was such as, in regions where books are more in requisition, and seem more in place, would testify considerably in behalf of the judgment and good taste of the possessor. They were all English books, it is true, but they were genuine classics of the best days of British literature, including the more recent writers of the day. There were additional proofs, in such as he took home with him, of the equal taste and industry of their reader. The fine passages were scored marginally with pencil-lines, and an occasional note in the same manner indicated the acquaintance of the commentator with the best standards of criticism. Beauchampe made another observation, however, which had the effect of leaving it still doubtful whether these notes were made by the present owner. They were all in a female hand. He found that a former name had been carefully obliberated in every volume, that of Miss Cooke being written in its stead. Though doubtful, therefore, whether to ascribe to her the excellent criticism and fine taste which thus displayed itself over the pages which he read, this doubt by no means lessened his anxiety to judge for himself of the attainments of their possessor; and fortune—we may assume thus much—at length helped him to the interview which he sought.

The mother, one day, with nice judgment, fell opportunely sick. It is easier to suspect that she willed this event than to suppose the daughter guilty of duplicity. It necessarily favored the design of Beauchampe. He made his morning visit, which had now become periodical, was ushered into the parlor, where, after a few moments, he was informed that Mrs. Cooke was not visible. She pleaded indisposition. Miss Cooke, however, had instructed the

servant to say to Mr. Beauchampe that he was at liberty to use the library as before.

By this time the eager nature of Beauchampe was excited to the highest pitch of anxiety. So many delays—such baffling—had deprived his judgment of that deliberate action, without the restraint of which the boundaries of convention are very soon overpassed. A direct message from the mysterious lady, was a step gained. It had the effect of still further unseating his judgment, and, without scruple, he boldly despatched a message by the servant, soliciting permission to see Miss Cooke. An answer was immediately returned in which she declined seeing him. He renewed the request with the additional suggestion that he had a communication to make. This necessarily produced the desired effect. In a few minutes she descended to the parlor.

If Beauchampe had been fascinated before, he was certainly not yet prepared for the commanding character of that beauty which now stood before him. He rose, trembling and abashed, his cheeks suffused with blushes, but his eyes, though dazzled, were full of the eager admiration which he felt. She was simply clad, in white. Her person, tall and symmetrical, was erect and dignified. Her face was that of matured loveliness, shaded, not impaired, by sadness, and made even more elevated and commanding by an expression of intense pain which seemed to mingle with the fire of her eyes, giving a sort of subdued fierceness to her glance, which daunted quite as much as it dazzled him. Perhaps a something of severity in her look added to his confusion. He stammered confusedly; the courage which had prompted him to seek the interview, failed utterly to provide him with the intellectual readiness by which it was to be carried on. But the feminine instinct came to his relief. The lady seated herself, motioning her visiter to do the same.

"Sit down, sir, if you please. My mother presumes

that you are anxious to know how she is. She instructs me to thank you for your courtesy, and to say that her indisposition is not serious. She trusts in another day to be quite restored."

By this time Beauchampe had recovered something of his confidence.

"It gives me pleasure, Miss Cooke, to hear this. I did fear that your mother was seriously suffering. But I can not do you and myself the injustice to admit that I came simply to see her. No! Miss Cooke, an anxiety to see you in person, and to acknowledge the kindness which has given me the freedom of your library, were among the objects of my visit."

The lady became instantly grave.

"I thank you, sir, for your compliment, but I have long since abandoned society. My habits are reserved. I prefer solitude. My tastes and feelings equally require it. I am governed so far by these tastes and feelings, which have now become habits, that it will not suit me to recognise any new acquaintance. My books are freely at your service, whenever you wish them. Permit me, sir, to wish you good morning."

She rose to depart. Beauchampe eagerly started to his feet.

"Stay, Miss Cooke. Do not leave me thus. Hear me but for a moment."

She resumed her seat with a calm, inflexible demeanor, as if, assured of her strength at any moment to depart, she had no apprehensions on the subject of her detention. The blush again suffused the cheeks of Beauchampe, and the rigid silence which his companion observed, as if awaiting his utterance, suddenly increased his difficulties in this respect. But the ice once broken, his impetuous temper was resolved that it should not freeze again.

"I know, Miss Cooke," he observed, "after what you have just said, that I have no right any longer to trespass

upon you, but I dare not do otherwise—I dare not depart —I am the slave of a passion which has brought me, and which keeps me here."

"I must not listen to you, Mr. Beauchampe," she replied, rising, as if to leave the room.

"Forgive me!" he exclaimed, gently detaining her— "forgive me, but you must."

'Must!" her eyes flashed sudden fires.

"I implore the privilege to use the word, but in no offensive sense. Nay, Miss Cooke—I release you—I will not seek to detain you. You are at liberty—with my lips only do I implore you to remain."

The proud woman examined the face of the passionate youth with some slight curiosity. To this, however, he was insensible.

"You are aware, Mr. Beauchampe," she remarked, indifferently, "that your conduct is somewhat unusual."

"Yes, perhaps so. I believe it. Nay, were I to think, Miss Cooke, I should perhaps, under ordinary circumstances, agree to pronounce it unjustifiable. But, believe me, it is meant to be respectful."

She interrupted him:—

"Unless I thought so, sir, I could not be detained here a moment longer."

"Surely, surely, Miss Cooke, you can not doubt my respect—my——"

"I do not, sir."

"Ah! but you are so cold—so repulsive, Miss Cooke."

"Perhaps I had better leave you, Mr. Beauchampe. It will be better for both of us. You know nothing of me; I nothing of you."

"You mistake, Miss Cooke, in assuming that I know nothing of you."

"Ha! sir!" she answered, rising to her feet, her face glowing like scarlet, while a blue vein, like a chord, divided


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the high white forehead in the midst. "What mean you, what know you!"

"Much! I know already that you are alone among women—alone in beauty—in intellect!"

He paused. He marked a sudden and speaking change upon her features which struck him as more singular than the last. The flush had departed from her cheeks, the blue vein had suddenly sunk from sight—a complete pallor overspread her face, and with a slight tremor over her frame. she sank upon the seat from which she had arisen. He sprang forward, and was at once beside her upon his knees. He caught her hand in his own.

"You are sick—you are ill!" he exclaimed.

"No! I am better now!" she answered in low tones.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed. "I feared you had spasms—I dreaded I had offended you. You are still so pale, Miss Cooke—so very pale!"—and he again started to his feet as if to call for assistance. She arrested him.

"Do not alarm yourself," she said with more firmness. "I am subject to such attacks, and they form a sufficient reason, Mr. Beauchampe, why I should not distress strangers with them. Suffer me now to retire."

"Bear with me yet awhile!" he exclaimed, "I will try not to alarm or to annoy you. You ask me what I know of you! nothing, perhaps, were I to answer according to the fashion of the world; everything, if I answer according to the dictates of my heart."

"It is unprofitable knowledge, Mr. Beauchampe."

"Do not say so, I implore you. I know that I am a rash and foolish young man, but I mean not to offend—nay, my purpose is to declare the admiration which I feel."

"I must not hear you, Mr. Beauchampe. I must leave you. As I said before, you are welcome to the use of my books."

"Ah! Miss Cooke, it is you, and not your books which have brought me to your dwelling. Suffer me to see you

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when I come. Suffer me to know you—to make myself known—to bring my sisters; to conduct you to them. They will all be so glad to see and know you."

She shook her head mournfully, while a sad smile rested upon her lips as she replied:—

"Mr. Beauchampe," she said, "I will not affect to misunderstand you; but I must repeat, as I have said to you before, I have done with society. I am in fact done with the world."

"Done with the world! Oh! what a thought! You, Miss Cooke, you so able to do all with it!"

"You can not flatter me, Mr. Beauchampe. The world can be nothing to me. I am nothing to it. To wear out life in loneliness, forgot, forgetting, is the utmost of my hopes from the world. Spare me more. It is not well, it will not be desirable, that any intimacy should exist between me and your sisters."

"Oh! why not? they are so gentle, so pure!"

"Ah! no more, sir, I implore you;" her brow had suddenly become clouded, and she rose. "Leave me now, sir—I must leave you. I must hear you no longer."

Her voice was firm. Her features had suddenly put on their former inflexibility of expression. The passionate youth at once discovered that the moment for moving her determination was past, and every effort now to detain her would prejudice his cause.

"You will leave me, Miss Cooke—you will drive me from you—yet let me hope——"

"Hope nothing from me, Mr. Beauchampe. I would not have you hope fruitlessly."

"The wish itself assures me that I can not."

"You mistake, sir—you deceive yourself!" she replied with sterner accents.

"At least let me not be denied your presence. Let me see you. I am not in the world, nor of it, Miss Cooke. Let me sometimes meet you here, and if I am forbid to speak of

other things, let me at least speak and hear you speak of these old masters at whose feet I perceive you have been no idle student."

"Mr. Beauchampe, I can promise nothing. To consent to receive and meet you would be to violate many an internal resolve."

"But why this dreary resolution?"

"Why!—but ask not, sir. No more from me now. You knew not, sir—and you meant not—but you have wakened in my mind this morning many a painful and dreary thought, which you can not dissipate. I say this to excuse myself for what might seem rudeness. I do not wish to excite your curiosity. I tell you, sir, but the truth, when I tell you that I am cut off from the world—it matters not how, nor why. It is so—and the less I see of it the better. When you know this, you will understand why it is that I should prefer not to see you."

"Ah! but not why I should not seek to see you. No Miss Cooke, your dreary destiny does not lessen my willingness to soothe—to share it."

"That can never be."

"Do not say so. If you knew my heart——"

"Keep its secrets, Mr. Beauchampe. Enough, sir, that I know my own. *That*, sir, has but one prayer, and that is for peace—but one passion, and that, sir——"

"Is—speak, say, Miss Cooke, tell me what this passion is? Relieve me; but tell me not that you love another. Not that—anything but that."

"Love!" she exclaimed scornfully; "love! no, sir, I do not love. Happily, I am free from any such weakness—that weakness of my sex!"

"Call it not a weakness, dear Miss Cooke—but a strength—a strength of the heart, not peculiar to your sex, but the source of what is lofty and ennobling in the heart of man."

"Ay, he has a precious stock of it, no doubt; but no more

of this, Mr. Beauchampe. I have my passion, perhaps, but surely love makes no part of it."

"What then?"

"Hate!" she cried with startling energy.

"Hate! ha! can it be that *you* hate, Miss Cooke?"

"Ay, sir, it is possible. Hate is my passion, not the only one, since it produces another bearing its own likeness."

"And that?——"

"Is revenge!— Ask yourself, with these passions reigning in my heart, whether there is room for anything more— for any other! There is not, and you may not deceive yourself with the vain hope to plant any feebler passion in a spot which bears such poisonous weeds."

Thus speaking she left the room, and, astounded by her vehemence, and by the strange though imperfect revelation which she had made, Beauchampe found himself alone!

CHAPTER VIII.

DEVELOPMENTS OF PASSION.

Had the words of the lady fallen from the lips of an oracle, they could not have more completely fastened themselves on the ears of our hero. Her sublime beauty as she spoke those wild accents was that of one inspired. Her eye flashed with fires of a supernatural brightness. Her brow was lifted, and her hand smote upon her heart, when she declared what fierce passions were its possessors, as if they themselves were impelling the blow, and the heart was that of some mortal enemy.

Beauchampe was as completely paralyzed as if he had suffered an electric stroke. He would have arrested her departure, but his words and action were equally slow. He had lost the power of hands and voice; and, when he was able to speak, she had gone.

Confused, bewildered, and mortified, he left the house; and sad and silent he pursued his way along the homeward paths. Before he had gone far he was saluted with the laughter of merry voices, and his sisters were at his side. What a contrast was that which instantly challenged the attention of his mind, between the girlish, almost childish and characterless damsels beside him, and the intense, soul-speaking woman he had left! How impertinent seemed the levity of Jane! how insipid the softness and milky sadness of the gentle-hearted Mary! The reflections of the brother

were in no wise favorable to the sisters, but he gave no utterance to the involuntary thoughts.

"Why, the queen of Sheba has struck you dumb, Brother Orville!" said the playful Jane. "You have seen her to-day, I'm certain. That's the way she always comes over one. She has had on her cloudy-cap to-day for your especial benefit."

"But have you seen her, brother?" asked the more timid Mary.

"To be sure he has—don't you see? nothing less could make Orville look on us as old Burke, the schoolmaster, used to look on him when he put the nouns and verbs out of countenance. He has seen her to be sure, and she came out clothed in thunder, I reckon."

"Jane, you vex Orville. But—you did see her, brother?"

"Yes, Mary, Jane is right."

"Didn't I tell you? I could see it the moment I set eyes on him."

"And don't you think her very beautiful, brother?"

"Very beautiful, Mary."

"Yes, a sort of thunderstorm beauty, I grant you," said Jane; "dark and dismal, with such keen flashes of lightning as to dazzle one's eyes and terrify one's heart!"

"Not a bad description, Jane," said the brother.

"To be sure not. Don't I know her? Why, Lord love you, the first time we were together I felt all crumpled up, body and soul. My soul, indeed, was like a little mouse, looking everywhere for a hole to creep into and be out of the way of danger; and I fancied she was a great tigress of a mouser, with her eyes following the mouse every which way, amusing herself with my terrors, and ready to spring upon me and end them the moment she got tired of the sport. I assure you I didn't feel secure a single moment while I was with her. I expected to be gobbled up at a moment's warning."

"How you run on, Jane, and so unreasonably!" said the

gentle Mary. "Now, brother, I think all this description very unlike Anna Cooke. That she's sad, usually, and gloomy sometimes, I'm willing to admit; but she was very kind and gentle in what she had to say to me, and I believe would have been much more so, if Jane hadn't continually come about us making a great laughter. That she is very smart I'm certain, and that she is very beautiful everybody with half an eye must see."

"I don't, and I've both eyes, and pretty keen ones too."

"Well, girls," said Beauchampe, "I intend that you shall have a good opportunity to form a correct opinion of Miss Cooke—her talents and her beauty. I intend to carry you both to visit her to-morrow."

"Oh, don't, don't, brother, I beg you! she'll eat me up, the great mouser! I sha'n't be a moderate mouthful for her anger."

And the mischievous Jane darted from his side, and lifted up her hand with a manner of affected deprecation.

Mary rebuked her as was usual on such occasions, and her rebuke was somewhat seconded by one which was more effectual. The brother betrayed some little displeasure as well in words as in looks, and poor Jane contrived to make the *amende* by repressing some portion of that lively temerity of temper which is not always innocuous in its pleasantries.

In this way they proceeded to the cottage, where, in private, the young man contrived to let his mother know how much he was charmed with the mysterious lady, but not how much of his admiration he had revealed. On this head, indeed, he was as little capable as anybody else of telling the whole truth. He knew not, in fact, what he had said in the interview with Miss Cooke. He had felt the impulse to say many things, and in his conscience felt that he might have said them; but of the precise nature of his confessions he knew nothing. Something, indeed, he might infer from what he recollected of the language of

Anna Cooke to himself. He could easily comprehend that the freedom with which she declared her feelings must have been induced in great degree by the revelation of his own; but, as he had no right—and, by-the-way, as little wish—to betray her secrets, so he naturally spared himself the mortification of telling his own.

Thus matters stood with him. His mother listened gravely. She could see, in the faltering tongue and flushed face of her son, much more of the actual state of his feelings than his words declared. She was not satisfied that he should fall in love with Miss Cooke: not that she had anything against that young lady—she had none of the idle prejudices of her eldest daughter—but that the beautiful stranger—and she acknowledged her to be beautiful—did not impress her favorably. Mrs. Beauchampe was a very pious lady; and the feeling of society is so nearly allied to that of pure religion, that when she found Anna Cooke deficient in the one tendency, she naturally suspected her equal lack of the other. But, in the next place, if the old lady had her objections to the young lady, she, at the same time, was too fond of her son to resist his wishes very long or very urgently. She contented herself with suggesting some grounds of objection, which the ardency and eloquence of the latter found but little difficulty in overcoming. At all events, it was arranged that Beauchampe should take his sisters the next day to visit his fair, and, so far, tyrannical enslaver.

From this visit, Beauchampe, though without knowing exactly why, had considerable expectations. At least, he did not despair of seeing the young lady. The mother politely kept sick—much, it may be added, to the annoyance of her daughter. The day came, and breakfast was scarcely over before the impetuous youth began to exhibit his anxiety. But the sisters had to make their toilet, and something, he fancied, was due to his own. A country-girl has her own ideas of finery, and, the difference of taste aside,

the only other differences between herself and the city-maiden are differences in degree. The toilet is the altar where Vanity not only makes her preparations, but says her prayers. We care not to ask whether Love be the image that stands above it or not. Perhaps there are few calculations of the young female heart in which Love does not enter as an inevitable constituent. Certainly, few of her thoughts are altogether satisfactory, if they bear not his figures in the woof.

Beauchampe's sisters fairly put his patience to the test; and, strange to say, his favorite sister Mary was much the most laggard in her proceedings. She certainly had never before made such an unnecessary fuss about her pretty little person. At length, however, all were made ready. The party sallied forth, reached the house of Mrs. Cooke, were admitted, and, after a brief delay, the daughter entered the room, to a very quick march beaten by the heart of our ardent hero.

But, though this accompaniment was so very quick, the entrance of Anna Cooke was calm, slow, and dignified, as usual. She received the party very kindly; and her efforts to please them while they stayed seemed as natural and unconstrained as if the business of pleasing had been a habit of her life. Jane's apprehensions of being eaten up soon subsided, and the gentle Mary had the satisfaction of bringing about, by some inadvertent remark of her own, an animating conversation between her brother and the lovely hostess. We say animated conversation, but it must not be supposed that it was a lively one. The animation of the parties arose from their mutual earnestness of character. The sanguine temperament thus readily throws itself into the breach, and identifies itself with the most passing occasions. It was in this way that Beauchampe found himself engaged in a brief and pleasant discussion of one of those topics, arising from books, in which the parties may engage with warmth, yet without endangering the harmony

of the conference; even as a wild strain of music—from the rolling, rising organ, or the barbaric drum and Saracenic trumpet—will make the heart thrill and throb again, with a sentiment of awe which yet it would be very loath not to have awakened.

Beauchampe was perfectly ravished, the more particularly as he did not fail to see that Miss Cooke was evidently not insensible to the spirit and intelligence which he displayed in his share of the dialogue. The presence of the sisters, fortunately, had the effect of controlling the brother in the utterance of those passionate and personal feelings which had been forced, as it were, from his lips the day previous. Love was unspoken by either, and yet, most certainly, love was the only thought of one, and possibly, of both. But love is the most adroit of logicians. He argues his case upon the data and criteria of a thousand far less offensive topics. Religion, law, politics; art, science, philosophy; all subjects he will discuss as if he had no other purpose than to adjust their moot points and settle their vexing contrarieties. The only misfortune is that when he is done—nay, while he is going on, one is apt to forget the subject in the orator. Special pleader that he is, in what a specialty all his labors terminate!

When Anna Cooke and Orville Beauchampe separated that day, what of the argument did they remember? Each readily remembered that the speaker was most eloquent. Beauchampe could tell you that the fair debater was never so beautiful in person, so high and commanding in intellect before; and when Anna Cooke was alone, she found herself continually recalling to her mind's eye, the bright aspect and beaming eyes of the enthusiastic young lawyer—so earnest, so seemingly unconscious of himself, as he poured forth the overflowing treasures of a warm heart, and a really well-stored and naturally-vigorous intellect. She saw too, already, how deeply she had impressed herself upon his fancy. Beauchampe's heart had no disguises

Strange feelings rose into her own. Strange, terrible thoughts filled her mind; and the vague musings of her wild and scarcely coherent spirit, formed themselves into words upon her tongue.

"Is not this an avenger!" she muttered. "Is not this an avenger sent from heaven! I have striven in vain. I am fettered. It is denied to me to pursue and sacrifice the victim. Oh! surely woman is the image of all feebleness. These garments are its badges; and sanction obstruction and invite injustice. As I am, thus and here, what hope is there that vengeance can be mine? The conquest of this enthusiastic youth will afford me the freedom that I crave, the agent that I need, the sacrifice for which only I dream and pray. With him the victim may be sought and found wherever he hides himself, and this crushed heart shall once more rise in triumph—this trampled pride be uplifted—the pangs of this defrauded and lacerated bosom be soothed by the sacrifice of blood!

"And why should it not be so? Why? Do I live for any other passion? Do I entertain any other image in my soul? What is love, to me, and fear, and hope, and joy—the world without and the world within—what but a dark abode in which there is but one light—one star, red and wild—a planet rising fiery at the birth of hate, only to set in blood, in the sacrifice of its victim. Here is one comes to me bearing the knife. He is mine, so declare his looks—he loves me, so equally speak his words and actions. Shall I not use his love for my hate? What is his love to me? His love—ha! ha! ha! His love, indeed—the love of a young ambitious lawyer. Is it not rather the perfection of vengeance that I should employ one of the tribe for the destruction of another!

"But no—no! why should I involve this boy in my fate? Why should I make him my instrument in this wild purpose? He is not of the same brood, though of that brotherhood. This youth is noble. He is too ardent, too impetu-

ous, for a deliberate design of evil. His soul is generous. He feels—he feels!—he, at least, is no masked, no cold-blooded traitor, serpent-like, crawling into the open and warm heart to beguile and sting.

"No—no! I must not wrong him thus. He must be spared this doom. I must brood over it alone, and let the fates work it as they may. Though, were he but half less ardent—could I suspect him of a baseness—I should whet the dagger, and swear him to its use! Yes—at any altar, for that sacrifice—though that altar be the very one on which *I* am the sacrifice—though it bear the name of love, and hold above it *his* cruel and treacherous image!"

Such were the frequent meditations of the passionate and proud woman. Her mother prompted these not unfrequently without intending it. She, with the sagacity of an ancient dealer, soon discovered the sort of coin which Beauchampe was disposed to bring with him into Love's crowded market-place. She readily detected, in the unsophisticated manners of Beauchampe, the proper material on which it would be easy for her daughter to work. The intense, inflammable, impetuous nature was such as a single glance of those dark, bright eyes—a single sentence from that mellow, yet piercing, sweet, yet deep-toned voice—might light up with inextinguishable flame—might prompt with irresistible impulses. Of course, the old lady had no knowledge of the one absorbing passion which had become a mania in the breast of her daughter. Her calculations went no farther than to secure a son-in-law—but of this the daughter had no thought, only as it might be necessary to effect other objects. *Her* purpose was to find an avenger, if anything; and, even for this object, we have seen, from her spoken meditations, she was yet too generous to seek for such an agent in one so unselfish, so true-hearted as Beauchampe had appeared.

But the rough-hewing of events was not to be left either to mother, or daughter, however resolved and earnest might

be the will which they severally or mutually exercised. The strongest of us, in the most earnest periods of our lives, move very much as the winds blow. It may hurt our vanity, but will do our real interests no harm to declare, that individual man is mostly, after all, only a sort of moral vane on the world's housetop. If you find him stationary for any length of time be sure it is less from principle than rust.

CHAPTER IX.

LOVE AND LAW.

"Denial, which is death,
Hangs on her lips, and from her heart to mine
Sends the great agony, like an icy shaft!"

THE progress of Beauchampe, though in one respect nothing, was yet not inconsiderable as bringing about the development of his own tendencies and affections. In the results which his desires might have suggested to his mind, there had been no sort of progress. He was pretty much where he was at the beginning. His pursuit, begun in his instincts, and seemingly from mere curiosity, had, however, brought him to a better consciousness of the meaning of that sudden fancy which had prompted him to dream of a heart-ideal at the moment when love seemed to be the remotest thing from his thoughts. He now began to feel that a fate had been busy to bring about the acquaintance between himself and the mysterious stranger. He had identified the vague image of his fancy with the fascinating woman whose charms, for the first time, seemed to put his passions into activity. Yet his thoughts gave him but little encouragement. He had no such vanity as could persuade him that his interviews with the object of his fancy had been productive of any good to his cause; and his moments of calmer reflection only taught him additional humility, as he felt how very wide was the gulf that lay between his hopes, his claims, and pretensions, and the very remarka-

able woman whom he had begun to worship. He did not deceive himself for a moment with the idea that he had made, or could make, any impression upon her. He felt that he had not done so; and while he was as eager in his desires as ever, he was full of despondency as he examined, with all the calmness possible to his nature, the very slender foundation for his hopes. The startling character of the scene which we have just described—her terrible declaration, so evidently earnest—the mysterious secret of her life, the existence of which it declared, but did not elucidate—all seemed to determine against the possibility of any progress with a nature at once so wild, so powerful, and so utterly unlike the ordinary characteristics of the sex as usually found in society.

But perseverance, where passion is the impelling power, will sooner or later work its way to the object which it seeks. It will bring about the issue, certainly, though it may be disappointed in its results. If hate be intense on the one hand, love, in the case of a determined will, is no feeble opponent; at all events, the one may be as tenacious of its object as the other: and the fiery passions of Beauchampe, if less matured and less concentrative than the hate which raged in the bosom of Anna Cooke, were yet in hourly training under the guidance of a fate, which, as she was now beginning to think, contemplated the union of both forces, for the gratification of at least one of the seemingly hostile passions!

We pass over numerous small details in the progress of the parties, which were yet, in some degree, important in bringing about the general result. They served gradually to break down the barriers, of a social kind, which had hitherto stood up as a wall between the two families. The impetuous nature of Beauchampe had succeeded in tearing away those which had been set up by his own. He was too much the object of warm affection with mother and sisters to suffer them very long to maintain their hostilities to

his obvious desires; and, without exactly apprehending that her son designed anything further than the communion with a young woman whose intellect had won the admiration of his own—without thinking it certain, or even probable, that this communion would ripen into love—for Mrs. Beauchampe felt that there was something repulsive to herself in the character of Anna Cooke, and naturally concluded that the same qualities would exercise antagonistic effects to passion on the part of her son—she at length gave fully in to his wishes that there should be a closer intimacy between her girls and the beautiful and mysterious stranger.

This concession won, the ardent nature of Beauchampe pushed his advantages with due celerity and earnestness. He suffered no day to escape without some approach to the mutual intercourse of the parties; and, with even pace, Mrs. Cooke, and even her daughter, became reconciled to the frequent presence of the Beauchampes within their household, while the visits of the strangers, though less frequent, were now stripped of nearly all constraint. Our young lawyer felt that he had compassed a considerable degree of ground when he found himself admitted to continual intercourse with the Cookes, as a friend of the family. Mrs. Cooke had some unproductive property, of which she desired to dispose. She had certain ancient claims, which were thought not beyond recovery. There were papers, and titles, and letters, which were to be examined professionally; and young Beauchampe was duly installed as the lawyer of the widow and her daughter.

Lawyer and lover! The combination promises rare results in logic. We shall see what they are to produce. Usually, the one sinks himself in the other character. Let the client understand that this is not certainly the fact, and he considers his case in bad condition. The lover will be apt to kill the lawyer, in his opinion. He will get out of such doubtful custody before next term, if this be possible. At all events, he will desire assistant counsel.

We doubt if Beauchampe ever fully surrendered his mind to the law-matters of Mrs. Cooke. We somewhat fear that he considered all the business a bore. At all events, he hurried over its details, whenever they conferred on the subject, with what Mrs. Cooke soon began to think a singular want of regard for her interests.

But neither did he seem to make much progress with his own. Though he turned away from the mother to the daughter, leaving the law to shift for itself, yet love with the latter was an interdicted subject.

But when, and for how long, will love stay interdicted?

Can you answer, gentle reader? What is your experience of the matter? As easily curb the tides, chain the winds, arrest the flight of birds in their season — do any other impossible thing — with the subtlest agencies of life and nature working with an indomitable will, and under the impulse of a law the secret of which no man can claim to fathom.

Beauchampe was under interdict of law.

Love was under interdict on Beauchampe's lips.

But love could not be put under interdict in Beauchampe's heart —

And the wild blood of Beauchampe was of such fiery impulse, that it never yet had bowed submissively to law.

What curbed him for a while, and made him submissive, in appearance, to the interdict, was awe, veneration, the humility of his hope, the fear lest he should prejudice and lose his case by precipitation. In brief, for the first time in his life, he called in Prudence to his aid.

Now, when Love makes an ally of Prudence, it becomes a very formidable power. It was the only ally who could possibly have served Beauchampe in his approaches to Anna Cooke. It disarmed her vigilance in the first place; it increased his own; and sap may enable one to overcome the fortress which resists the most terrible assault.

Time wrought favorably for Beauchampe. It enabled

him to show his resources of mind and character—above all, the ingenuous and impulsive, the frank and faithful, the solicitous and confiding, the dutiful and considerate—which, in spite of his fiery passions, were the predominant virtues of his mind and heart.

Anna Cooke gradually took pleasure in seeing him. She found him both abler in intellect and gentler of disposition than she had fancied him at first. His amenities, prompted as much by his fears of the loss of her favor, had greatly controlled the natural audacity of his blood, and the prudence of his approach gradually served to quiet her suspicions. She somewhat relaxed in that vigilant watch of eye and ear which she had maintained over his first approaches. She no longer looked for the equivocal in his speech; no longer encountered the doubtful with asperity. The way was gradually smoothing for the approach of other powers. The small pioneer virtues, which Passion so cunningly employs under the guidance of that great engineer Prudence, were doing wonders in the cause of a despot, who, as yet, judiciously kept his standard out of sight.

Anna Cooke was really getting to be quite pleased when Beauchampe looked in of a morning, or strolled in to tea, unaccompanied by his sisters, of an evening.

It is one of the natural arts of Love to excite the sensibilities into the most commanding activity, even while it refines and purifies the tastes; to subdue all the sharpnesses of character, even as it subdues the asperities of tone and accent in the voice; to throw into the eyes a mild, persuasive expression of entreaty and solicitude; a hesitating tenderness into the utterance; and, above all, so certainly, and even suddenly, to elevate the mind, that even the vulgar nature and the inferior understanding become modified and enlarged under its influence—and Ignorance itself seems, as if under inspiration, to receive such an increase of intelligence, that its speech shall rarely declare its deficiencies.

Now, though by no means a wise, learned, or greatly-gifted youth, Beauchampe was neither vulgar nor ignorant. Still, at the beginning of his intercourse with Anna Cooke, he was full of those salient points of character and manner which exhibit the lack of that refining attrition of society which no course of education can well supply. And some of these saliences grated upon Anna Cooke on his first interview with her.

But, in a single week, all this was altered. Love carries with it those instincts of good taste, those solicitous sensi bilities, that refinement becomes inevitable under its presence; and without his own consciousness, perhaps, though it did not escape hers, the bearing, the whole carriage and deportment, tone and manner, of Beauchampe, underwent rapid transition. From the rough, sturdy, confident rustic —almost insolent in his independence, and very determined upon his objects—indifferent to, if not wholly ignorant of, the higher polish of the social world—he grew, in a single week, into the subdued and quiet gentleman, heedful always of the sensibilities of those whom he addressed, and tenderly considerate of the claims and rights of others. At a single bound he became a gentleman!

And that word "gentleman"—how few have ever weighed and properly taught its due significance! To acquire this character is one of the first processes by which we make a Christian. Certainly, no man can be a Christian who is not first a gentleman. And this involves no idle lesson for the clergy. Among writers, old Middleton, the dramatist, seems to have been almost the only one who seems fully to have caught a just conception of the character so as to define it. Incidentally, he gives a happy array of the virtues—not merely qualifications, graces, and manners—essential to the gentleman. His allusion to the MAN Christ will only be misconstrued by blockheads:—

"Patience, my lord! why, 'tis the soul of peace;
Of all the virtues, 'tis nearest kin to Heaven:

It makes men like the gods. *The best of men,*
That e'er wore earth about him, was a sufferer;
A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit,
The first true gentleman that ever breathed!"

Beauchampe, under the tuition of Love, was making great progress toward becoming a gentleman. Love first made him gentle; Prudence then brought in the other allies, Patience, Forbearance, Conciliation, Solicitude—humble virtues, serving-brothers of the household, whose permitted tendance will make of the humblest dwelling—

"A happy home, like heaven!"

Beauchampe's improvement, under the new course of tuition—under this new, potent, and almost unsuspected teacher—was wonderfully rapid. A few weeks had made the most surprising changes in bearing, sentiment, character, nay, in the very expression of his face. His features—and the fact belongs to the studies of the psychologist in especial, as significant of what the refining arts did for the Greek soul and character—his very features, though not wanting in a certain nobleness before, had become softened, sweetened, spiritualized as it were, in the wonderful progress which the gentler virtues had been making in his heart.

The result did not escape the attention of Anna Cooke. She was not insensible to the singular and interesting change in his features since the time when she first saw him. It surprised even her, who was ordinarily so indifferent to external aspects. It gradually affected her own feelings, as it conveyed an exquisite compliment to her own influence. She saw the beginning of this improvement of the young man, in the birth of his devotion to herself. She began to feel a certain sympathy with the progress of a sentiment which was so powerful and at the same time so unobtrusive, so little claiming or aspiring. Not that she dreamed to encourage it. How could she? That was impossible! So she said to herself, whenever she thought upon the subject. We have seen her expressed reflections.

She renewed them. Her mind was as unmoved as ever. The changes, whatever they might be, were confined wholly to her tastes and sensibilities. But these, after all, are the true provinces in which true love is decreed to work!

Her mental opinions and resolves had undergone no change. Nay, they grew stronger, by a natural tendency, as her interest in the young man increased. She resolved that he should not be sacrificed; and this resolve was the necessary parent of another. She could never give encouragement to the object of her present lover. She could never be his wife. No! she already felt too much interested in the youth, to use her own energetic language, uttered in midnight soliloquy, "to dishonor him with her hand!" She was not conscious of the sigh which fell from her lips when this determination was spoken. She was not conscious, and consequently not apprehensive, of the progress which a new passion was making in her heart. That sigh had its signification, but this, though it fell from her own lips, was inaudible to her own ears.

Laboring under this unconsciousness with regard to her own feelings, it was perhaps not so great a stretch of magnanimity, on her part, to resolve that Beauchampe should not be permitted to serve her brooding hatred, or to share in her secret sorrows. Such was her determination.

One day, he grew more warm in his approaches. Circumstances favored his object, and the topics which they had discussed, on previous occasions, insensibly encouraged this. Suppressing his eagerness of manner, putting as much curb as he could on the impatient utterance which was only too habitual to him where his feelings were excited, he strove, in the most deliberate form of address, to declare his passion, and to solicit her hand.

"Mr. Beauchampe," she said firmly, "I thank you. I am grateful for this proof of your regard and attachment; and, in regretting it, I implore you not to suspect me of caprice, or a wanton desire to exercise the power which

your unhappy preference confers on me. Nor am I insensible to your claims. Were it possible, sir, that I could ever marry, I know no one to whom I would sooner intrust my affections than to you. But there is an insuperable barrier between us—not to be broken—not to be overpassed. Never! never! never!"

"Do not speak thus, dearest Miss Cooke. Spare me this utterance. What is the barrier, this insuperable barrier, not to be broken, not to be overpassed? Trust me, it can be broken, it can be passed. What are the obstructions that true love can not remove?"

"Not these, not these! It is impossible, sir. I do not deceive myself—I would not deceive you—but I assure you, Mr. Beauchampe, that the truth I declare is no less solemn than certain. I can never listen to your prayer—I can never become your wife—no, nor the wife of any man! The barrier which thus isolates me from mankind is, I solemnly tell you, impassable, and can not be broken."

"Suffer me to strive—it is not *in me* that your objections arise?"

"No! but—"

"Then suffer me to try and overcome this difficulty—remove this barrier."

"It will be in vain, sir; you would strive in vain."

"Not so! declare it—say in what it consists—and, believe me, if such talents as are mine, such toils as man can devote, with such a reward awaiting him as that which my success would secure for me, can effect an object, I must succeed. Speak to me freely, Miss Cooke. Show me this obstacle—"

"Never! never! There, at once, the difficulty rises. I can not, dare not, reveal it. Ask no more, I entreat you. I should have foreseen this, and commanded it otherwise. I have suffered your attentions too long, Mr. Beauchampe: for your own sake, let me forbid them now. They can never come to good. They can have no fruits. Here,

before Heaven, which I invoke to hear me, I can never be—"

"Stay!—do not speak it!" he exclaimed, passionately catching her uplifted hand, and silencing, by his louder accent, the word upon her lips.

"Stay, Miss Cooke! be not too hasty—be not rash in this decision; I implore you, for your sake and mine. Hear me calmly—resume your seat but for a few moments. *I* will strive to be calm; but only hear me."

He led her to a seat, which she resumed with that air of recovered dignity and stern composure which shows a mind made up and resolute. He was terribly agitated, in spite of all his efforts at composure. His eyes trembled, and his lips quivered, and the movements of his frame were almost convulsive. But he also was a man of strong will. But for his youth, he had been as inflexible as herself. He recovered himself sufficiently to speak to her in tones surprisingly coherent, and with a degree of thoughtfulness which showed how completely a determined will can control the utterance even of extraordinary passion.

"Hear me, Miss Cooke. I can see that there is a mystery about you which I do not seek to penetrate. You have your secret. Let it be so still. I love you, deeply, passionately, as I never fancied it was possible for me or any man to love. This passion rends my frame, distracts my mind—makes it doubtful if I could endure life in its denial. I have seen you only to worship you. Lost to me, I lose faith as well as hope. I no longer know my divinities; I no longer care for life, present or future. Do not suppose I speak wildly. *I* believe all that I say. It *must* be as I say it. Now, hear me: to avoid this fate, I am willing to risk many evils—dangers that might affright the ordinary man under the ordinary feelings of man. You spoke the other day of having but a single passion, which was not love!—"

"Hate!" she interrupted him to say.

"Hate, it was—and that gave birth to another not unlike it."

"Revenge! yes, revenge!" such was her second interruption. He proceeded:—

"I understand something of this. You have been wronged. You have an enemy. I will seek him. I will be your champion—die for you if need be—only tell me that you will be mine!"

"Will you, indeed, do this?"

She rose, approached him, laid her hand on his arm, and looked into his eyes with a keen, fixed, fixing, and fascinating glance, like that of a serpent. Her tones were very low, very audible, but how impressive! They sunk not into his ear, but into his heart, and a cold thrill followed them there. Before he could reply, however, she receded from him, sunk again into her seat, and covered her face in her hands. He approached her. She waved him off.

"Leave me, Mr. Beauchampe—leave me, now and for ever. I can not hear you. I *will* not. I need not your help. You *can not* revenge me."

"I will! I can! Your enemy shall be mine. I will pursue him to the ends of the earth! But give me his name."

"No, you shall not!" she said with apparent calmness. "Thus I reject your offer—your double offer. I will not wrong your generosity—your love, Beauchampe—by a compliance with your prayer. Leave me now; and, oh, come not to me again! I would rather not see you. I feel for you—deeply, sincerely—but, no more. Leave me now—leave me for ever."

He sunk on his knee beside her. He clasped her hand, and carried it passionately to his lips. She rose, and withdrew it from his grasp.

"Rise, Beauchampe," she said, in subdued but firm accents. "Let it lessen your disappointment to know that, if I could ever be the wife of any man, you should have the preference over all. I believe your soul to be noble. I do

not believe you would be guilty of a baseness. Believing this, I will not abuse your generosity. You are young. You speak with the ardor of youth; and with the same ardor you feel, for the moment, the disappointments of youth. The same glow of feeling will enable you to overcome them. You will forget me very soon. Let me entreat you, for your own sake, to do so. Henceforward, I will assist you in the effort. I will not see you again."

A burst of passionate deprecation and appeal answered this solemn assurance, but did not affect her decision. He rose, again endeavored to grasp and detain her hand, but she broke away with less dignity of movement than usual; and, had not the eyes of the youth been blinded by his own weaknesses, he might have seen the big tear in hers, which she fled precipitately only to conceal.

CHAPTER X.

HOPE DENIED.

From this period Miss Cooke studiously withheld her presence from the eyes of her infatuated lover. In vain did he return day after day to her dwelling. His only reception was accorded by the mother, whose garrulity was considerably lessened in the feeling of disappointment which the course of her daughter necessarily inspired in her mind. She had had her own plans, which, as she knew the firmness of her daughter's character, she could not but be convinced were effectually baffled. To her Beauchampe declared himself, but from her he received no encouragement except that which was contained in her own consent, which, as he had already discovered, did not by any means imply that of the one object whose consent was everything. The old woman pleaded in secret the passion of the young man, but she pleaded fruitlessly. Her petition became modified into one soliciting only her daughter's consent to receive him as before; and to induce this consent the more readily, Beauchampe pledged himself not to renew the subject of love.

But Anna Cooke now knew the value of such pledges. She also knew, by this time, the danger to herself of again meeting with one whose talents and worth she had already learned to admire. The feeling of prudence grew stronger as her impressions in his favor were increased. This con

tradiction of character is not of common occurrence. But the position of Anna Cooke was not only painful but a peculiar one. To suffer her affections to become involved with Beauchampe was only to increase her difficulties and mortifications. She felt that it would be dishonorable to accept him as a husband without revealing her secret, and that revealed, it would be very doubtful whether he would be so willing to take her as his wife. This was a dilemma which she naturally feared to encounter.

We do not say, that she did not also share in those feelings of disappointment and denial under which Beauchampe so greatly suffered. The sadness increased upon her countenance, and softened its customary severity. She felt the darker passions of her mind flickering like some sinking candle-flame, and growing daily more feeble under the antagonist feeling of another of very different character. The dream of hate and vengeance which for five years had been, however baneful to her heart, a source of strength to her frame, grew nightly less vivid, and less powerful over her imagination; and, hopeless as she was of love, she trembled lest the other passions which, however strangely, had yielded her solace for so long a time, should abandon her also.

For such a nature as that of Anna Cooke, some strong food was necessary. There must be some way to exercise and employ those deep desires and earnest spiritings of her mind, which else would madden and destroy her. It became necessary to recall her hates, to renew her vows and prayers of vengeance, to concentrate her thoughts anew on the bloody sacrifice which she had so long meditated in secret.

But this was no easy task. The image of Beauchampe came between her eyes and that of the one victim whose destruction alone she sought. The noble, generous, devoted countenance of the one, half obliterated the wily, treacherous visage of the other. The perpetual pleadings

of the mother contributed to present this oostacle to her mind.

To escape from this latter annoyance, and, if possible, evade the impression, which, in softening her feelings, had obliterated some of her hates, she renewed a practice which she had for some time neglected. She might be seen every morning stealing from the cottage and taking her way to the cover of the adjacent forests. Here, hidden from all eyes, she buried herself in the religious solitude. What feelings filled her heart, what fancies vexed her mind, what striving forms of love and hate, conflicted in her fancy, we may perhaps conjecture; but there, alone, save with the images of her thought, she wasted the vacant hours; drawing her soul's strength from that bitter weed of hate, the worst moral poison which the immortal soul can ever cherish.

With Beauchampe the sorrow was not less, and there was less to strengthen; but that little was not of so dangerous a quality. He felt the pang of denial, but the bitterness of hate had never yet blighted the young, green leaves of his youthful affections. He was unhappy, but not desperate. Still he could not but see, in the course taken by Anna Cooke, a character of strength and inflexibility, which rendered all prospects of future success, which looked to her, extremely doubtful. There had been no relaxing in her rigor. The mother, whose own sympathy with his cause was sufficiently obvious, had shown its hopelessness, even when she most encouraged him to persevere. Perseverance had taught him the rest of a hard lesson—and the young lover, in his first love, now trembled to find himself alone!

Alone! and such a loneliness. The affections of mother and sisters no longer offered solace or companionship to his heart. They no longer spoke to his affections. Their words fell upon his ears only to startle and annoy; their gentle smiles were only so many gleams of cold, mocking

moonlight scattered along the dreary seas of passion in his soul. He felt that he could not live after this fashion, for he had still a hope—a hope just sufficiently large to keep him doubtful. Anna Cooke had declared that her scruples were not to him. The bar which severed her from him was that which severed her from man. But for that—such was her own assurance—"he should be preferred to all others whom she knew."

That bar! What was it? Beauchampe was not sufficiently experienced in the history of the passions, to conjecture what that obstacle might be. He fancied, at the utmost, that her affections might have been slighted; he knew—but chiefly from books which are not always correct in such matters—that women did not usually forgive such an offence. Betrothed, she might have been deserted—perhaps with insult—and this, he readily thought, might amply justify the fierce spirit of vengeance which she breathed. Or, it might be that she had been born to fortune, and had been wronged and robbed, by some wily villain, of her possessions. Something of this he fancied he had gathered from the garrulous details of the mother.

But, even were these conjectures true, still there was nothing in them to establish such a barrier as Anna Cooke insisted on, between his passion and herself. Blinded as he was by his preference, and, in his own simple innocence of heart, overlooking the only reasonable mode by which such a mystery could be solved, the truly wretched youth became hourly more so. Failing to find his way to her presence, he resorted to that process of pen, ink, and paper, which the Heloïse of Pope insists was designed by Heaven expressly for the use of such wretches as Beauchampe and herself, and his soul poured itself forth upon his sheet with all the burning effluence of the most untameable affection. Page after page grew beneath his hands—every line a keen arrow from the bended bow of passion, and shot directly at the heart. To borrow the phraseology of the old Span-

ish teachers of the *estilo culto*, if his tears wet the paper, the heat of his words dried it as soon. Beauchampe spoke from his soul and it penetrated to hers. But though she felt and suffered, she was unmoved. Her reply was firm and characteristic:—

"Noble young man, leave me and be happy. Depart from this place; seek me, see me, think of me, no more! Why should you share a destiny like mine? Obey your own. It calls you elsewhere. If it be just to you, yours will be lofty and honorable; if not, at least it will spare you any participation in one so dreary as is mine. Go, I implore you, and cease to endure the anguish which you still inflict. Go, forget me, and be happy. Yet, if not, take with you as the saddest consolation I can give, the assurance that you leave behind you a greater suffering than you bear away. If, as you tell me, the arrow rankles in your heart, believe me there is an ever-burning fire which encircles mine. I have not even the resource of the scorpion, not, at least, until my 'desperate fang' has done its work on another brain than my own. Then, indeed, the remedy were easy; at all events where life depends upon resolution, one can count its allotted minutes in the articulations of a drowsy pulse. Once more, noble young man, I thank you; once more I implore you to depart. I will not send you my blessings—I will not endanger your safety by a prayer of mine. Yet, I could pray for you, Beauchampe. I believe you worthy of the blessings, and perhaps you would not be injured by the prayer, of one so desolate as I am!"

This letter, so far from baffling his ardor, was calculated to increase it. He hurried once more to the dwelling of Mrs. Cooke; but only to meet a repulse.

"Tell him, I can not and *will* not see him!" was the inflexible reply; and the mother was not insensible to the

struggle which shook the majestic soul and form of the speaker in uttering these few words.

In a paroxysm of passion, most like frenzy, Beauchampe darted from the dwelling. That day he rambled in the woods, scarcely conscious of his course, quite unconscious of any object. The next, taking his gun with him by way of apology, he passed in the same manner. And thus for two days more.

Somewhat more composed by this time, his violent mood gave way to one of a more contemplative character; but the shadows of the forest were even more congenial to the disconsolate than the desperate. They afforded him the only protection and companionship which he sought in either of his moods. Here he wandered, giving himself up to the dreary conviction which swells every young man's heart. when first loving, he seems to love in vain, and when the sun of hope seems set for him for ever; and henceforth, earth was little more than a place of tombs—the solemn cypress, and the Druid mistletoe, its most fitting decorations; while, under each of its deceptive flowers, care, and pain, and agony, lay harbored in the forms of gnat, and wasp, and viper, ready to dart forth upon any thoughtless hand that stoops to pluck the beauty of which they might fitly be held the bane.

But, it was not Beauchampe's destiny, as Anna Cooke had fancied, to escape from hers. In vain had she striven to save him from it. He was one not to be saved. Mark the event. To escape him—perhaps dreading that her strength might fail, at some moment, to resist his prayer to see and speak with her; and tired of her mother's constant pleading in behalf of her suitor—she fled from the house, and, as we have seen, stole away, day by day, to lonely places, dark, gloomy, and tangled, such as the wounded deer might seek out, in his last agonies, in which to die in secret.

We have seen already what has been the habit of Beau-

champe in this respect. His woodland musings had not been without profit. Assured now of the hopelessness of his pursuit from the stern and undeviating resolution which the lady of his love had shown, at every attempt which he made to overcome her determination, he, at length, with a heavy heart, concluded to adopt her counsel, and to fly from a scene in which disappointment had humbled him, and where all of his most acute feelings were kept in a state of most painful irritation. But, before this, he again addressed her by letter. His words were brief:—

"I shall soon leave this place. I shall obey you. Yet, let me see you once more. Vouchsafe me one look upon which my heart may brood in its banishment. Let me see that dear image—let me hear that voice—that voice of such sweet sorrow. Do not deny me this prayer. Do not; for in leaving you, dearest, but most relentless woman, I would not carry with me at the last moment, to disturb the holier impression which you have made upon my soul, a feeling of the injustice of yours. With a heart hopeless and in the dust, I implore you. Do not reject my prayer. Do not deny me—let me once more behold you, and I will be then better prepared to rush away to the crowded haunts of life, or it may be the more crowded haunts of death. Life and death! ah! how naturally the words come together. You have rendered their signification little in my ears. You, you only. Yet I ask you not now to reverse the doom. Is not my prayer sufficiently humble! I ask you not to spare, not to save; only to soothe the pangs of that departure which you command, and which seems little less than death to me. On my knees, I implore you. Let me see you but once—once more—let me once more hear your voice, thongh I hear nothing after."

To this, the answer was immediate, but the determination was unchanged. It said:—

"I may seem cruel, but I am kind to you. Oh! believe me. It will console me under greater suffering than any I can inflict, to think that you do believe me. I am a woman of wo—born to it—with no escape from my destiny. The sense of happiness, nevertheless, is very strong within me. Were it not impossible that I could do you wrong, I could appreciate the generous love you proffer me. I feel that I could do it justice. But terror and death attend my steps, and influence the fortunes of all who share in mine. I would save you from these, and—worse! You need not to be told that there are worse foes to the proud, fond heart, than either death or terror. Fancy what these may be, and fly from me as from one whose touch is contagion—whose breath is bondage—whose conditions of communion are pangs, and trials, and—shame! Do not think I speak wildly. No, Beauchampe, you little dream with what painful inflexibility I bend myself to the task of saying thus much. Spare me and yourself any further utterance. Go, and be happy. You are yet young, very young. Perhaps you know not that I am older than you. Not much—yet how much. Oh! I have so crowded moments with events—feelings, the events of the heart—that I am grown suddenly old. Old in youth. I am like the tree you sometimes meet—flourishing, green at the top—while in the heart sits death and decay, and, perhaps, gloomier tenants beside. These I can not escape—I can not survive. But you have only one struggle before you. You have suffered one disappointment. It will disturb you for a while, but not distress you long. You will find love where you do not seek it—happiness, which you could never find with me. Go, Beauchampe—for your sake, I deny your prayer. I will not see you. Do not upbraid me in your soul, nor by your lips. Alas! you know not how hard is the struggle, which I have, to say so much. You know not from what a bondage this struggle saves you. My words shall not call you back. No looks of mine shall beguile you. Be you

free, Beauchampe—free and happy! If you could but guess the temptation which I overcome—the vital uses which your love could be to me, and which I reject, you would thank me—oh! how fervently—and bless me—would I could say, how justly! Farewell! Let it be for ever, Beauchampe! Farewell! farewell for ever!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE TERRIBLE SECRET.

BEAUCHAMPE sat, sad and silent, in a corner of one low chamber in his mother's cottage. The family were all present. There was an expression in every face that sympathized with his own. All were sad and gloomy. A painful reserve, so strange hitherto in that little family of love, oppressed the spirits of all. They were aware of the little success which followed his course of wooing. They, perhaps, did not regret the loss so much as the disappointment of one whom they so much loved. With the exception of little Mary Beauchampe, Anna Cooke had not taken captive the fancy of either of the ladies. Jane positively feared and disliked her, with the natural hostility which a person of light mind always entertains for one of intensity and character. Mrs. Beauchampe's objections were of another kind; but she had seen too little of their object, and was too willing to promote her son's wishes, to attach much importance to them. She had derived them rather from the casual criticisms of persons *en passant*, than from anything which she herself had seen.

It would have been no hard matter for Beauchampe, had he been successful in his suit, to reconcile all the parties to his marriage. That he was unhappy in the rejection of his hand, made them so; and the feeling was the more painful as the event had made Beauchampe determine to

depart on the ensuing day. He felt the necessity of doing so. Active life, the strifes of the politician, the triumphs of the forum, were at hand, offering him alternatives, if not atonements. In the whirl of successive performance, and in scenes that demand promptitude of action, he felt that he could alone dissipate the spell, or at least endure its weight with dignity, which the charms of Anna Cooke had imposed upon him. His resolution was declared accordingly.

It may be supposed that the distress of the little family made the scene dull. Much was said, and much of it was in the language of complaint. Poor Mary wept with a keen sense of disappointment, more like that of her brother than any one. Jane muttered her upbraidings of the "scornful, high-headed, frowsy Indian Queen, who was too conceited to see that Orville was ten thousand times too good a match for such as she;"—while Mrs. Beauchampe, with the usual afflicting philosophy of age which has survived passion, discoursed largely on the very encouraging text which counsels us to draw our consolation from our very hopelessness. Pretty counsel, with a vengeance! Beauchampe thought it so.

The torturous process to which these occasional remarks and venerable counsels subjected him, drove him forth at an early hour after dinner. Once more he traversed the woods in moody meditation. He inly resolved that he should see them the last time. With this resolve he determined to pay a personal visit to the spot where, at his coming, he had obtained the first sight of the woman, who, from that moment, had filled his sight entirely. He followed the sinuous course of the woods, slowly, moodily, chewing the cud of sad and bitter thought alone.

His passion was in its subdued phase. There is a moment of recoil in the excited heart, when the feelings long for repose. There is a sense of exhaustion—a dread of further strife and excitement, the very thought of which

makes us shudder; and the one conviction over all which fills the mind, is that we could willingly lay ourselves down in the shady places, none near, and sleep—sleep the long sleep, in which there are no such tortures and tumults.

Such were the feelings of Beauchampe, and thus languid, from this recoil, in the overcharged sensibilities, he went slowly forward, with a movement that denoted quite as much feebleness as grief.

He was already buried in the thick woods—he fancied himself alone—when, suddenly, he heard a pistol-shot. He started, with a sudden recollection of a like sound, which had attracted his ears on his first approach to the same neighborhood. The coincidence was at least a strange one.

He now determined to find out the practitioner. He paused for a few moments, and looked about him. He was not exactly sure of the quarter whence the sound proceeded; but he moved forward cautiously, and at a venture. Suddenly he paused! He discovered, at a distance, the person of the very woman whom he had been so long seeking—she whose obduracy denied him even the boon of a last look and farewell accent.

His first impulse was to rush forward. A second and different impulse was forced on him by what he saw. To his astonished eyes she bore in her hands a pistol. He watched her while she loaded it. He saw her level it at a tree, and pull the trigger with unhesitating hand. The bark flew on every side, betraying, by the truth of her aim, at a considerable distance, the constancy of her practice.

Beauchampe could contain himself no longer. He now rushed forward. A faint cry escaped her as she beheld him. She dropped the pistol by her side, clasped and covered her face with her hands, and staggered back a few paces.

But, before Beauchampe reached her, she had recovered, and, picking up the pistol, she came forward. Her eye sparkled with an expression which showed something like resentment. Her voice was abrupt and sharp.

"You rush on your fate!" she exclaimed. "Why, Beauchampe, do you thus pursue me, and risk your own destruction?"

"At your hand, it is welcome!" he exclaimed, mistaking her meaning.

"I mean not *that!*" she replied.

"But you inflict it!"

"No! no!" impatiently. "I do not. I have prayed against it—would spare you that and every risk; but you will it otherwise! You rush on your fate; and if you dare, Beauchampe—mark me! if you dare—it is at your option. Heretofore, I have striven *for you*, and against myself; but you have forced yourself upon my privacy—you have sought to fathom my secrets—and it is now necessary that you should bear the penalty of forbidden knowledge!"

"Have I not supplicated you for these penalties? Ah! what pain—inflicted by your hand—would not be pleasure!"

"You love me!—I believe you, Beauchampe; but the secret of my soul is the death-blow to your love! Ah! spare me!—even now I would have you spare me. Go—leave me for ever; press no farther into a mystery which must shock you to hear, shame me to speak, and leads—if it drives you not hence with the speed of terror—leads you to sorrow and certain strife, and possibly the cruelest doom."

"Speak! I brave all! I am your bondsman, your slave. Declare the service: let me break down these barriers which divide us."

He caught her hand passionately in his as he spoke, and pressed it to his lips. She did not withdraw it.

"Beauchampe!" she said, with solemnity, fixing her dark, deep-glancing eyes upon his face—"Beauchampe! I will not swear you! You shall hear the truth, and still be free. Know, then, that you clasp a dishonored hand!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE VOW OF VENGEANCE.

THE terrible words were spoken. The effect was instantaneous. He dropped the hand which he had grasped. A burning flush crimsoned the face of the woman; an instant after, it was succeeded by the paleness of death.

"I knew it!" she exclaimed, bitterly, and with cruel keenness of utterance. "I knew that it would come to this. God! this is thy creature man! In his selfishness he destroys—in his selfishness he shames us. He pries into our hearts, to declare their weakness—to point out their spots—to say, 'See how I can triumph over, and trample upon!'"

"Anna!" exclaimed Beauchampe, in husky accents—"speak not thus—think not thus. Give me but a moment's time for thought. I was not prepared for this."

The young man looked like one in a dream. A ghastly expression marked his eyes. His lips were parted; the muscles of his mouth were convulsed.

"Nay, sir, it needs not. Your curiosity is satisfied. There is nothing more."

"Yes," he exclaimed, "there is!"

"There is!" she answered promptly. "To clasp the dishonored hand, and take from its grasp the instrument of its vengeance. In a few words, Beauchampe, this hand can only be yours under one condition. Dishonored though

it is, I tell you, sir, never yet did woman subject man to more terrible conditions as the price of her love."

"I take the hand," he said, "ere the condition is spoken."

"No, Beauchampe, that can not be. You shall never say that I deceived you. As I shall insist on the fulfilment of the condition, so it is but fair that you be not hooded when you pledge yourself to its performance."

She withdrew the hand, which he offered to take, from his contact.

"This dishonored hand is pledged to vengeance on him who blackened it with shame. Hence its practice with the weapon of death. Hence the almost daily practice of the last five years. Here, in these woods, I pursue a sort of devotion, where Hate is the deity — Vengeance the officiating priest. I have consecrated my life to this one object. He who takes my hand must adopt my pledge — must devote himself also to the work of vengeance!"

He seized it, and took the weapon from its grasp. With the pistol lifted to heaven, he exclaimed:—

"The oath! — I am ready!"

Tears gushed from her eyes. She spoke in subdued accents:—

"Five long years have I toiled with this delusive dream of vengeance! But what can woman do? Where can she seek — how find her victim? Think you, Orville Beauchampe, that if I could have met my enemy, I would have challenged the aid of man to do this work of retribution? In my own soul was the strength. There is no feminine feebleness of nerve in this eye and arm! I should have shot and struck — ah! Christ!"

She sunk to the ground with a spasm, which was the natural effect of such passions working on such a temperament. The desperate youth knelt down beside her in an agony of equal passion and apprehension. He drew her to his breast, he glued his lips to her cheeks, scarcely conscious that she was lifeless all the while.

Her swoon, however, was momentary only. She recovered even while he was playing the madman in his fondness.

Refusing his assistance, and pushing him from her, she staggered up, exclaimed, in piercing, trembling accents:—

"What have I done? what have I said?"

"Given me happiness, dearest," he replied, attempting to take her hand.

"No, Beauchampe," she answered, "let me understand myself before I seek to understand you. I am scarcely able, though!"—and, as she spoke, she pressed her hands upon her eyes with an expression of pain.

"You are still sick!" he observed apprehensively.

"I am in pain, Beauchampe, not sick. I am used to these spasms. Do not let them alarm you. They are not deadly, and, if they were, I should not consider them dangerous. I know not well what I have said to you, Beauchampe, before this pain; but as I never have these attacks unless the agony of mind becomes too intense for one to bear and live, I conclude that I have told you all. You know my secret—my shame!"

"I know that you are the noblest-hearted woman that ever lived!" he exclaimed rapturously.

"Do not mock me, Beauchampe," she answered mildly. "Speak not in language of such extravagance. You can not speak too soberly for my ears, you can not think too soberly for your own good. You have heard my secret. You have forced me to declare my shame! You had no right to this secret. Was it not enough that I told you that the barrier was impassable between us? Did I not swear it solemnly?"

"It is not impassable."

"It is!"

"No!" he exclaimed with looks and accents equally decisive, "this is no barrier. You have been wronged—your confidence has been abused. That I understand. I

care not to know more. I believe you to be all that is pure and honorable now; and, in this faith, I am all yours. In this faith I pray you to be mine."

"Beauchampe, this is not all! Mere love, though it be such as yours — simple faith, though so generous and confiding — these do not suffice. The food is sweet, but it has little nutriment. My soul is already familiar with higher stimulants. It needs them — it can not do without them. I do not ask the man who makes me his wife, to believe only that I can be true to him — and will! — I demand something more than a confidence like this, Beauchampe: my husband must avenge my dishonor. This is the condition of my hand. Dishonored as it is, it has a heavy price. He must devote his life to the work of retribution. To this he must swear himself."

"I am already sworn to it. The moment which revealed your wrong, bound me as your avenger. You shall only point to your enemy—"

"Ah, Beauchampe, could I have done so, I should not have needed to stain your hands with his blood. But he eludes my sight. I hear nowhere of him. He is as if he had never been.

"His name!" said Beauchampe.

"You shall know all," she replied, motioning him to a seat beside her on the trunk of a fallen tree. "You shall know all, Beauchampe, from first to last. It is due to you that nothing should be withheld."

"Spare yourself, dearest," said Beauchampe tenderly. "Tell me nothing, I implore you, but the name of your enemy, and what may be necessary for the work of vengeance."

"I will tell you *all*. It is my pride that I should *not* spare myself. It is due to my present self to show that I am not blind to the weaknesses of my former nature. It is due to what I *am*, to convince you that I can never again be what I have been. O Beauchampe! I have meditated

often and sadly, since I have known you, the necessity of making this revelation. At our first meeting, my heart said to myself, 'The love by which I was betrayed has at length sent me an avenger!' I saw it in your instant glances—in the generous earnestness of your looks and tones—in the fervent expression of your eye—in the frank, impetuous nature of your soul! But I said to myself:—

"'I will deny myself this avenger. I will reject the instinct that tells me he is sent as one. Why should I involve this noble young man in a fate so desperate and sad as mine? It shall not be!' With this resolve, I strove against you. Nay, Beauchampe, I confess to you farther, that, even when my will strove most against you, my heart was most earnest in your favor. With my increasing regard for you, grew my reluctance to involve you in my doom. The conflict was close and trying; and then, when the strife in my mind was greatest, I meditated what I should reveal to you. I went over that long and cruel memory in the deep silence of these woods—in the deeper silence of midnight in my chamber: I could not escape from the stern necessity which compelled the remembrance of those moments of bitterness and shame. By frequent recall, they have been revived in all their burning freshness; every art of the traitor—the blind steps by which I fell—the miserable mockeries which deluded me—and the shame which, like a lurid cloud, dusk and fiery, has ever since hung before my eyes! All this I can relate—his crime and my folly—nor omit one fraction which is necessary to the truth."

"But why tell all this, dearest? Let it be forgotten—let all be forgotten, except the name of the villain whom it is allotted me to destroy."

"Forgotten? It can not be forgotten! Nay, more, it is a duty to remember it, that the vengeance may not sleep. Beauchampe, I have lived for years on this one thought.

By recalling these bitter memories, that thought was fed. Do not persuade me to forget them. You know not how much of life depends on the sustenance which thought derives from this copious but polluted fountain. Deprive me of this sustenance, and I perish. Deny me to declare all, and I can speak nothing. I can not curb my nature when I will; and where would you gather the fuel of anger, should I barely say to you that one Alfred Stevens—an artful stranger from a distant city—found me a simple, vain child among the hills, and, practising on my vanity, overcame my strength? This would serve but little in rousing that fierce fire of hate within you which sometimes, even in my own bosom, burns quite too faintly to be effectual. No, no! you shall witness the progress of the criminal. You shall see how he spun his web around my path—my soul!—by what mousing cunning he contrived to pull down a wing whose feeblest fancy, in those unconscious days, was above the mountains, and striving ever for the clouds. You shall see the daily records of its spasms, which my misery has made. To feel my struggle, you must share in it from the first."

He took her hand in his, and prepared to listen.

"You will feel my hand tremble," said she; "the flush may suffuse my cheek; for, oh! do not suppose I tell this tale willingly. No! I can not help but tell it. An instinct, which I dare not disobey, commands me; and truly, when I think of the instinct which told me that you *would* come—made you known to me as the avenger from the first moment when I saw you—and has thus forced you, as it were, in my own despite, upon my fearful secret—I almost feel that there is a divine, at least a fated compulsion, in the mood which now prompts me to tell you all. It is a necessity. I feel it pressing upon me as a duty. It is like that Fate which coerced the ancient mariner into the report of his marvellous progress, and compelled the listener to hear. It must be told; and you, Beauchampe, can not help but

hear. A power beyond mine own has willed it, and therefore you are here now. It chains us both. It wills that I should speak, and speak nothing but the truth. I can even suppress nothing. I am not able to control my own utterance. May the same power endue me with the strength to speak the history of my bitter, bitter shame!"

And, in truth, Beauchampe, like herself, was under a spell. He could not have torn himself away under any conditions, or with any impulse. He was fastened to the spot—not by her arts, for she sternly rejected any help of art, save that which naturally belonged to her own remarkable genius—not by the charms of her beauty, for her face now had more of terror in it than beauty—not by any sympathy which might arise from pity, for, as he looked into the sombre grandeur of her eyes, and the stern power of soul, and will, and mind, which declared itself in every feature of her countenance, in every action of her form, he felt that awe, not pity, was the most natural sentiment which she inspired.

Under the spell he sat beside her. Under a like spell—the imagination, in both, being the Prospero, the master of the magic wand—she spoke. And how—the first choking effort at utterance being overcome—how clearly, simply, sternly, she laid bare the whole cruel history, even as we have already told it—nothing suppressed, nothing obscured; no idle apologies for weakness offered—no excuses urged in behalf of sinful impulses. She spared herself in nothing. She laid herself bare to discovery, to keen analysis, to the most critical inspection. Governed, as she felt or fancied, by some supernatural influence, there was a terrible earnestness, an unequivocal intenseness and directness, in all she revealed, that would have left the most captious attorney at a loss for the opportunity to cross-examine. There was no attempt at glozing artifice, at adroit insinuation or suggestion, by which to soften the darker colors—to relieve the doubtful—to conceal what had been her real

errors, weaknesses, and vicious desires. All the characteristics of her soul—its follies, faults, foibles, vices—were all made apparent: but through all, equally apparent, was the proud spirit, falling chiefly through pride, the noble nature, the ingenuous ambition, the lustrous and wingéd genius!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BETROTHAL.

"I drink of the intoxicating cup,
And find it rapture. Yet, methinks I feel
As if a madness mingled with the sweet,
And dashed it with a bitter."

WHAT a hush for a moment hung over the forest when she ceased to speak!

The story was ended.

For a few moments, Beauchampe sat immoveable, as if slowly recovering from a spell. Then suddenly he shook himself free, started up with a cry of mingled joy and pain, and clasped her in his wild embrace.

His passion had undergone increase. He was no longer master of his pulses. Her superior will had already made itself felt in all the sinews of his soul. Every beat and bound of his heart was full of the exquisite fascination.

She extricated herself from his grasp. Her breathing came with effort. She pressed her hand upon her side, as if with a sudden sense of pain; then looked up, and met his eager glance with eyes which were so fixed, so glassily stern, that he looked alarmed, and clasped her hands in his own.

She was, in truth, deadly pale—but, oh, how strong!

"Fear nothing," she said, in a whisper; "it is nothing. I shall soon be well."

And a brief silence ensued between them, he gazing still with apprehension into her eyes.

"Look not thus, Beauchampe. I am better now. The pain is gone. I am used to it. It always comes with any great excitement, and this to-day has been a terrible one. I feared I should not have strength for it. Thank God, it is over—and—and—I am better now."

And she laughed hysterically.

Anna Cooke was wonderfully strong, but she was yet a woman. She had overtasked herself. She sank, a moment after, in a fainting-fit, upon the sward.

Beauchampe was terrified. He called her name, and received no answer. He ran off to a well-remembered brooklet, some two hundred yards distant, over which a gourd was suspended from a tree. He hurried back with it full of water, and found her recovering. She drank freely, bathed her face and forehead in the liquid, and felt relieved.

"And now, Beauchampe—now that you have heard all—now that you see and understand the full nature of the conditions imposed upon you—the fearful nature of the penalty—the crime, and its terrible consequences—I release you from your pledge! Be free! Go—leave me! I would not have your young and generous soul burdened with the sting, the sin, the agony, and the resolve, of mine!"

This was said, how mournfully, but with what sincerity!—with that utter self-abandoment which denotes the recoil and the subsidence of powerful and now-exhausted energies!

"Oh! how can you speak thus!" he answered reproachfully. "I would not be released. I ask not even respite. Your cause is mine—your wrongs! I feel them all! Your vengeance—I have sworn to accomplish it. It is now my passion not less than yours. Nay, more, I would have you dismiss it from *your* soul! I would have it exclusively my own!"

"And you are still willing, burdened with this poor wreck of youth, and virtue, and beauty—and with this terrible necessity—to undergo the consciousness of the world's

mock — nay, to see its skinny pointing finger, and hear its venomous tongue, as it mutters, while I pass, the cruel story of my shame!"

"I will make that story yet a memorial of virtuous vengeance, to be remembered in Kentucky when we are both in the dust!" was the vehement answer, while the eyes of the speaker flashed fire, and his hand was outwaved as if challenging the whole world's voice and ear. He continued: —

"If that story is to be told again, Margaret Cooper — for so, this once, will I call you — it shall sound as an ominous voice of terror, speaking doom and sudden judgment to the cold-blooded profligates who pride themselves on the serpent conquest over all that is blessing and beautiful in the world's Eden!"

The tears rolled down her cheeks. She had not thus wept before — never once had such tears covered her cheeks even in the moments of her bitterest remorse and suffering.

"Do not weep!" he said; "I can not bear to see you weep."

"It is for the last time," she answered, almost prophetically.

"What, indeed, had she to do with tears? They could not speak for passions, and such an agony as hers. Then, timidly, he laid one hand upon her wrist, while the other crept about her waist. And she shuddered. He felt the convulsive shiver, and withdrew his grasp. He whispered: —

"You are now to be mine — mine — you remember!"

"Alas! for you, Beauchampe, that it is so. It is not too late! You are still free to go. It is a ruin — not a heart, that I can give you!"

"Be it so! The ruin shall be more precious to my soul than the glory only born to-day.

"Leave me now, Beauchampe. Do not seek me again

until to-morrow. I would sleep to-day. I need sleep—sleep—more than anything besides. I have not slept once since I penned you that letter."

"Good Heavens! can it be possible? Oh! you must sleep. Shall I not see you home at once?'

"No! leave me, Beauchampe. I will find my way home after awhile. Leave me—will you not!"

"Yes—but Anna, let me take this weapon. It is *mine* now, remember, not yours! Here, with this hour, Anna, your practice ends—ends with the necessity."

"Take it. Hide it from my sight."

He possessed himself of the pistol, which he thrust hurriedly into his pocket, and then suddenly embracing and kissing her, he cried:—

"This, Anna—this—seals every vow, whether of love or vengeance!"

She waved him off, and as he disappeared slowly, she hurried still deeper into the wood. What were her meditations there? Who shall say? They were entertained for hours in deepest silence, were mournful, yet of uncertain character—now marked by a sense of relief which was momentary only, and still followed by a great cloud-like doubt, and vague, dark terror which seemed to stretch and spread over all the prospect.

And this cloud she could not disperse—she could not penetrate. It was ominous, she fancied, of her future.

"Oh, God!" she exclaimed, "if I have erred—if I have covered my soul with a new sin in thus involving this generous young man in my fate—in thus binding his soul with my own to the blind fury of this wild revenge which I have sworn."

Strange that she should doubt in this regard. Strange that human being in a Christian land should really fancy for a moment that God's sanction should hallow the purposes of a bloody vengeance. But, even thus wild and mistaken in their supposed sanctions are half the purposes of hu-

manity. The disordered judgment, governed by an imagination which the blood has wrought up to delirious dreams and excesses, can always evoke a sanction for all its purposes, from some terrible demon wearing the aspect of divinity!

And this false god whispered his encouragement audibly to her senses, until she grew satisfied—calmer—resolved—confirmed in all her purposes.

When she returned home and met her mother, she said, as quietly as possible:—

"Your wishes are answered, mother. I have seen Beauchampe. I have consented to be his wife!"

"Have you, indeed, Margaret! Oh! I am so glad. He is such an excellent young man, and of such a good family. Oh! you will be happy now, I know!"

"Happy!" exclaimed the girl with a look of scorn, mingled with surprise. "How can you fancy that there should be happiness for *me?*"

"And why not, Margaret? Who knows of what's done and past?"

"*He* knows! I have told Beauchampe the whole of my history."

"What!" almost with a scream. "You don't mean to say that you've been such a fool as to tell him about what happened at Charlemont—about Alfred Stevens!——"

"All! I have withheld nothing!"

The old woman threw up her eyes and hands with a sort of terror.

"And he consents to marry you after all!"

"Yes!"

"I don't believe it will ever come to that! No—no! Men are not such fools! Oh! Margaret, what could possess you to tell him *that?*"

"Truth, justice! I could do no less. Had I not told him, I had deserved my fate!"

She left the room as she said this, and hurried to the sol

itude of her own. The mother, when she was gone, expressed her horror and her wonder, at what she deemed the insane proceeding of her daughter, in more copious language than before.

"It's just like her. She was always different from everybody else. Now what woman of any sense would have told of such things to the very man that was offering her marriage. What a fool—what a fool! If Beauchampe comes back, then he's the fool! But he'll never come again. No—no! when he's cooled off, and begun to think over the matter, he'll go with a spur. That a daughter of mine should be such a fool. But she don't take a bit after me. All her foolishness comes from her father. Cooper was a fool too. He was for ever a-doing, a-thinking, and a-saying, things different from everybody else. And he, too, would call it truth, and right, and justice; as if anybody had any reason to think of such matters, when it's a clear case of interest and safety a-pinting all the other way. Such a fool-daughter as she is! We'll see if he comes again. And I reckon it's her only chance; and even if she had another, with as good a man, she'd be doing and telling the same thing over again. Such a fool—such a fool! But I'll put on my bonnet, and go over and see the Beauchampes, and see what they've got to say about it."

And she prepared herself; but just as she was about to sally forth, her daughter reappeared, and arrested her at the entrance. She had divined her mother's purposes, knowing something of *her* usual follies.

"Do not go to Mrs. Beauchampe's, mother."

"And why not, if all's true that you've been telling me?"

"You do not doubt its truth, mother, I know. Why I wish you not to go, is for a good reason of my own. I must only repeat that you must not go there now. A few days hence, mother, and only after some of them have come here."

"Ah! I see! You have your fears too, Margaret, that it's all a flash-in-the-pan, and that he'll be off; and that's the very reason why I would go. We must clinch the nail before it draws."

The face of Margaret was full of ineffable scorn.

"You must not go, mother. Beauchampe is not to be detained, should he desire to depart, by any argument that you can offer; and if he goes—well! I have no fear that he will go, and if such were really his inclination, I should be the first to encourage it. You do not understand either of us. Meddle not. You can make nothing—may mar everything, and will certainly mortify me! Wait! The Beauchampes must now seek you, not you them!"

The will of the daughter prevailed as usual, though her own will remained a grumbling discontent. Margaret, having attained her purpose, retired again to her chamber, wasting no unnecessary words in answer to the growling dissatisfaction, that still seemed inclined to pursue her. The old woman had set her mind upon the visit and yielded very reluctantly—perhaps would not have yielded but for the threat of Margaret, sternly expressed, that if she interfered one bit in the matter, she would herself break away from the engagement. The mother too well knew the imperious nature of the daughter, not to feel the danger of incurring her resentment, after such a warning. She contented herself with the reflection that:—

"Margaret was a fool always, and nothing seemed to better her sense. Beauchampe"—she was sure—"will be certain to bolt as soon as he gets cooler and thinks over the matter."

But Beauchampe did not bolt!

When he reached home, he hardly suffered himself to enter the house, before he cried out to his mother and sisters:—

It's all settled! I'm so happy, mother. O girls! all's

right. I sha'n't leave you now for a long time—perhaps never, and we shall all be so happy together."

"Why, what's the matter, Orville? What has so unsettled you?" demanded the mother.

"Do tell us, brother, what's made you so happy? What has so excited you?" demanded Jane.

But Mary, the more sagacious as the more sympathizing, said at once, while she flung her arms about the neck of her brother:—

"Ah! I know; Anna Cooke has consented!"

"She has—she has! What a good guesser. You are my dear little sister. Ah! Mary understands her brother better than you all."

"So! she has consented?" said the mother, somewhat deliberately. "And did she give you any explanation, Orville, of her previous refusal—so stern, so peremptory?"

"Yes, Orville, how did she excuse herself? What explanation did she give?" demanded Jane.

"Explanation!" exclaimed the brother, a cloud suddenly covering his brow. "Ay! she gave me full—ample explanation."

"Well! what was it?"

"Enough, mother; that it was perfectly satisfactory to me. I am satisfied. Let us say no more on that subject. You will believe me when I tell you that I am satisfied. Further, I do not mean to say. She is now mine! all mine! and I am happy."

"God grant, Orville, that it be so!" answered the mother in grave accents. "Yet these so sudden changes, Orville, are strange to me, at least. But I will not cloud your happiness with a single doubt. I trust in God that she will bring you happiness, my son."

"Oh! never doubt, dear mother. She is a glorious creature—noble, beautiful—all that should bring a man happiness."

Happiness is not a creature of wild impulses and of

great excitements; nor is the glory of beauty, however unparalleled, nor the fascinations of genius, however powerful, the best guaranty of happiness — which needs sympathy, and security, above all things, and loves the shade rather than the sun; longing for quiet not turbulent waters, and rather keeping the passions in leash, than goading them into perpetual exercise by stimulating means.

Somehow, the wild joy of Beauchampe did not seem to his mother the best guaranty for his happiness. There was something prescient in the thoughts of the old lady, which made her sigh over the unborn future.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BRIDAL.

"Why, look you, sir, I can be calm as Silence
All the while music plays. Strike on, sweet friend,
As mild and merry as the heart of Innocence:
I prithee, take my temper. Has a virgin
A heat more modest?" — MIDDLETON.

A VAST change had certainly been wrought, within a very few hours, in the moods and feelings of Beauchampe. He had gone forth weary, dispirited, humbled, hopeless: he had returned bounding, wild, excited to enthusiastic measures — assured, within himself, of the attainment of every mortal desire that was precious.

But we can not call him a happy man — or one, indeed, whose prospect of happiness was very promising. We would not misuse that word, as we fear that it is too frequently misused. It is one the necessity for which is very rare in the ordinary progress of society and life. Its absolute significance is really to be found only in future conditions. But we need not go into any analysis of its propriety in common parlance. Enough that it deludes most people, at some period or another in their lives.

Beauchampe said he was happy — very happy — and he believed what he said, and his mother and sisters wished to believe, and Mary certainly did believe, quite as fervently as her brother himself. Certainly, if a man in a state of pleasant delirium may be considered happy, then Beauchampe was!

But happiness is scarcely consistent with any very great intensity of passion, excited to sleeplessness in the absorbing pursuit of a single object, particularly when the condition of the conquest implies trials, and struggles, and fears, and dangers, the measure of which no mind can compass, the end of which no mind can foresee!

Beauchampe had won the consent of the woman whom he had sought with all the intensity of a first passion. All young men find it easy to persuade themselves that such a condition must satisfy all the longings of the heart.

But young men build on the sands, and kindle their fires too frequently with dry straw, which blazes fearfully at first, but dies out, leaves no warmth, and covers the landscape with blackened stubble and fine ashes.

Beauchampe was not deceived, in a single respect, by or with the woman he had won. She was the very person that she appeared and claimed to be. She had concealed nothing from him—worn no mask—put on no disguises—nay, piercing her own heart, and laying bare its most hidden places, she had shown him, so far as she herself could find and understand them, the very motives, moods, interests, impulses, of her soul—which had informed her actions, and might inform them still—as, perhaps, no woman had ever shown them to lover before. If he yet labored under any delusion in respect to her, she was not the cause of it. Her pride, as well as just sense of his claims, had been at pains to strip herself of all things which might be calculated to delude. The very secret of her dishonor was revealed only because she was sworn to honor.

And he acknowledged no delusions. He was satisfied—as he thought, happy—and at first his joy was a delirium. She was the peerless creature, the woman among a world of women, such as he had thought her at first.

But we can not govern or restrain the imperious thought which works its way in the brain and soul, secretly, even as the mole in the garden; and we never dream of what is

going on below, even though the loveliest flower in our Eden is perishing at the roots.

After a few days, though Beauchampe still exulted, his mother fancied that his mind seemed jaded and wearied, his fancy had lost its wing, his eyes were heavy, yet wandering. He himself was quite unconscious of these external shows of the secret nature, but he too had a consciousness which disturbed his imagination. The very fact that his betrothal was so unlike that of any man of whom he had ever heard or read—that it was under such conditions—compelled his thought to a serious yet vague exercise of study, such as did not well comport with the unreasoning confidence which, perhaps, marks the presence of the most happy sort of love. Still, as yet, he did not exactly reason on the subject. He could not. The mind was exerting itself through the imagination, experimentally, as it were, sending out feelers into this or that region of the brain—sounding them—then withdrawing, to touch some other place.

The effect was, to bring into the otherwise bright atmosphere which surrounded him the perpetual presence of one small but dark and threatening cloud. He rubbed his eyes, but it was there. He looked away, but, when he turned his glance again upon the spot, it remained, steady and threatening as before.

Was there a Fate hidden in that cloud? Did it contain the evil principle, shadowing his progress, or was it simply the presentiment of evil—a benignant warning against the dangers yet wrapped in mystery? Was it the ominous sign of that fierce condition of hate which had been prescribed to him as the condition of love? Could Love prescribe such a condition—require such a sacrifice? Was it possible for that meek sentiment—so holy, so certainly from heaven—so celestial an element in the economy of heaven—was it possible for such a sentiment so openly to toil in behalf of its most deadly antipathy? Love laboring

for Hotel! It well might bring a cloud into the moral atmosphere of Beauchampe's soul, when he thought of these conditions.

And yet Anna Cooke had really learned to love Beauchampe. There is nothing contradictory or strange in this. We have painted badly, unless the reader is prepared for such a seeming caprice in her character as this. She is, whatever may be her boast, scarcely wiser than when she was eighteen. All enthusiasm and earnestness, she was all confidence then. She is so still. Her impressions are sudden and decided. She sees that Beauchampe is generous and noble-minded. She has discerned the loyalty of his character, and the liberality of his disposition. She finds him intellectual. His frankness wins upon her —his unqualified devotion does the rest. She sees in him the agent of that wild passion which had kept goading her without profit before; and Love, in reality, avails himself of a very simple artifice to effect his purposes. It is Love that insinuates to her, 'Here comes your avenger!'—and, deceived by him, she obeys one passion, when, at the time, she really fancies she is toiling in behalf of its antagonist.

See the further argument—felt, not expressed—of this wily logician!

He suggests to her that it is scarcely possible that Beauchampe will ever be called upon to fulfil his fearful pledges. For, where is the betrayer? For five years had the name been unspoken in the ears of his victim; for five years he had eluded all traces of herself and friends. He was gone, as if he had not been; and the presumption was strong that he was of some very distant region; that he would be very careful to avoid that neighborhood, hereafter, in which his crime had been committed: and as, in equal probability, the lot was cast which made this limited scene the whole world of Beauchampe's future life, so it followed that they would never meet; that the trial, to which she had sworn him, would never be exacted; and, subdued by time, and

the absence of the usual excitements, the pang would be softened in her heart, the recollection would gradually fade from her memory, and life would once more be a progress of comparative peace, and probably of innocent enjoyment.

It is an adroit, and not an infrequent policy of Love, to make his approaches under the cover of a flag which none is so pleased to trample under foot as he. He knows the usual practices of war, and has no conscientious scruples in the employment of an ordinary *ruse*. The drift of his policy was not seen by the mind of Anna Cooke; but it was—though less obvious than some of her instincts—not the less an instinct. Nay, more certainly an instinct, for it was of the emotions; while those of which she had spoken to Beauchampe were nothing more than the suggestions of monomania. Her imagination, brooding ever on the same topic, was always on the watch to convert all objects into its agents; and never more ready than when Love, coming forward with his suggestions, lent that seeming aid to his enemy which was really intended for his overthrow. It was only when she had become the wife of Beauchampe that she became aware of the true nature of those feelings which had brought about her marriage. It was after the tie was indissolubly knit—after he had pressed his lips to hers with a husband's kiss—that she was made conscious of the danger to herself from the performance of the conditions to which he was pledged. The fear of his danger first taught her that it was love, and not the mere passion for revenge, which had wrought within her from the moment when she first met him. The moment she reflected upon the risk of life to which he was sworn, that moment awakened in her bosom the full appreciation of his worth. Then, instead of urging upon him the subject of his oath, she shuddered but to think upon it; and, in her prayers—for she suddenly had learned to pray—she implored that the trial might be spared him, to which, previously, her whole soul had entirely been surrendered.

But she prayed in vain—possibly because she had learned to pray so lately. Ah! how easy would be all lessons of good—how easy of attainment and of retention—did we only learn to pray sufficiently soon! The habit of prayer is so sure to induce humility! and humility is, after all, and before all, one of the most certain sources of that divine strength, arising from love and justice, which sustains the otherwise falling and fearful world of our grovelling humanity.

The wife of Beauchampe prayed beside him while he slept. She prayed for mercy. She prayed against that fatal oath. Far better—such was her thought—that the criminal should escape for ever, than that her husband's hands should carry the dagger of the avenger. She now, for the first time, recognised the solemn force, the terrible emphasis, in the Divine assurance—"Vengeance is mine!" saith the Lord. She was *now* willing that the Lord should exercise his sovereign right.

But all this is premature. This change in her heart and mind was only now in slow and unsuspected progress. It required time, the actual formation of the new ties, the actual exercise of the feminine duties in an humble and as yet happy household. Up to the moment of her marriage, there had been no change in her heart or its purposes, such as moved her to any change in the conditions of the marriage. Far from it. When, on the contrary, the time approached, she summoned Beauchampe to a private interview the afternoon before the nuptials. They met, by appointment, in the same wood where the engagement had been made. Her sombre spirit was on her, wrapping her as in a pall; and, at his approach, she said abruptly and sternly:

"Beauchampe, the time has come. But it is not too late. You are at liberty, even now, to withdraw from these bonds. If you will it, Beauchampe, you are free from this moment, and shall never hear reproach of mine."

He rejected the boon proffered him, with indignant but loving reproaches.

"Have you summoned me for this, Anna?"

"No! not for this only—in part. It was due to you to afford you a last opportunity of escaping the terrible conditions upon which only can my hand be given. This, you know, was my oath. It requires yours. If you persist in claiming my hand—swear to avenge its dishonor!"

And she lifted up her hands in solemn adjuration, and he obeyed her; and there, in that silent solitude, he uttered audibly the oath to avenge her shame—to sacrifice her seducer, at bloody altars, the moment he should be found!

And it was as if the demons of the air which had inspired, trooped round to receive, the oath; for the sky darkened above them, even as the vow was uttered, and the awful stillness of the wood was as if the spirits were all listening breathlessly.

"Enough, Beauchampe! It is done. To-morrow I am yours!"

And, with these words, she left him—no kiss, no embrace, no look or word of tenderness.

But he looked for none—expected none. It was not a moment, nor were the moods of either suitable, for caresses. He looked up at the cloud as she went from sight, and enveloped in it, as he thought, for more than an hour he walked that wood, his fancies sublimed with the terrible oath which he had taken, and his whole soul shadowed as it were with the stately pall of velvet in some great solemnity.

The marriage followed the next day. The bride was calm and very pale, but firm and placid. Beauchampe's eye was eager and bright, and his cheeks flushed with hope and triumph. He felt sure that he was happy; and the cloud seemed to disappear from before his sight, and, for the moment, his landscape was without a speck.

And, in the sight of his joy, the mother and the sisters forgot their apprehension; and they took the bride to their

hearts as warmly as if they had never felt upon their souls the shadow of a doubt. But, even as the bridal vow was taken, Fear took the place of Hate in the soul of the bride, and she shuddered, she knew not why, at the kiss of her husband, which, as it declared the warmth of his passion, brought up in dark array before her eyes the images and events of terror to which that kiss had pledged him for ever!

CHAPTER XV.

THE HONEYMOON.

"What a delicious breath marriage sends forth,
The violets bed's not sweeter."—MIDDLETON.

"Oh! I distrust this happiness; it seems
Too exquisite to last. I fancy clouds
Already gather on the sky of bliss."—*Old Play.*

THEY were now man and wife. The bond, for weal or wo, was indissolubly fastened. But, for the present, we must not speak of wo. It did not now seem to threaten the happy household, of which Beauchampe was now the lord. In the novel joy of his situation, the enthusiastic young man lost sight of days and weeks and months. With very happiness he grew idle—the mind conquered by the heart. Law and politics were alike forgotten. He had no call to them at present. He was in a dream—in a dream-land like that of Eden, in which toil was a stranger, and care, that ever-intriguing toad was kept off by the Ithuriel spear of pleasure. He could have mused away life in this manner—never once conscious of the flight of time—there, amid groves of unbroken shade, with the one companion. And she—did she share the happiness which she imparted? Did the cruel fate relax in his persecutions? In the embraces of that fond young heart, did she forget the sting and agony of the past—did she lose herself a moment in the new dream of a fresh and better existence?

It is but reasonable to suppose that she did. She sang now, and her voice was a very rich and powerful one—combining the soul and strength of man with the sweetness and freedom of the bird. While her voice, in musing thought, subdued by humility to devotion, was full of a charming philosophy—social yet imaginative always—which would not have been unworthy of the lips of a divine priestess officiating among the oaks of Dodona, her soul, aroused by the sympathies of an ear which she wished to please, never poured forth strains of such sweet eloquence and song. She could improvise both verse and music. She resumed her pen and wrote as well as sang; and her verses grew less and less sombrous daily.

Beauchampe was all happiness. He had found a muse and a woman in one! Surely, they were, neither of them, unhappy then!

But the fates were not satisfied, even if their victims were forgetful. It was decreed that our hero should be awakened from his dream of happiness. One day a letter was put into Beauchampe's hands. He read it with a cloudy brow.

"No bad news, Beauchampe?" was the remark of his wife, expressed with some solicitude.

"Yes," he answered tenderly. "Yes, for I am forced to leave you for awhile. Read."

He handed her the letter as he spoke. She read as follows:—

"DEAR BEAUCHAMPE:—The campaign has opened with considerable vigor, and we feel the want of you. The sooner you come to the rescue the better. We must put all our lieutenants into the field. This fellow, Calvert, is said to be doing execution among our pigeons. He is quite successful on the stump. At G—— he carried everything before him, and fairly swept Jenkins and Clemens out of sight. He is to address the people at Bowling-Green on

the 7th, and you must certainly meet us there; or, shall I take you on my way down? Barnabas comes with me. He insists that we shall need every help, and is decidedly aguish. He has somehow contrived to make me a little apprehensive that we have been too confident, and accordingly a little remiss. He reports this man, Calvert, as a sort of giant, and openly asserts him to be one of the most able, popular orators we have ever had. He has a fine voice, excellent manners, is very fluent, and has his arguments at his finger-ends. I can not think that I have any reason to fear him whenever I can meet with him in person. But this, just now, is the difficulty. The difference between a young lawyer in little practice, and one with his hands full, is something important. Should I not join you on the 6th, you had better go on to the Green. He will be there by that time. I will meet you there certainly by the 8th; though I shall make an effort to take the stump on the 7th, if I can. Should I fail, however, as is possible, you must be there to take it for me, and maintain it till I come. Barnabas and myself will then relieve you, and finish the game.

"Why do we not hear from you? Whisker-Ben said at Club last night that he had heard some rumor that you were married or about to be married. We take it for granted, however, that the invention is his own. Barnabas flatly denied it, and even the pope (his nose, by the way, is thoroughly recovered) expressed his opinion that you were 'no such ass.' Of course, he suffered neither his own, nor my wife, to hear this complimentary opinion. One thing, however, was agreed upon among us, viz.: that you were just the man, not only to do a foolish thing, but an impolitic one; and a vote was carried, *nem. con.*, in which it was resolved to inform you that, in 'the opinion of this club, marriage is a valuable consideration.' A word to the wise, etc. You know the proverb. Barnabas spoke to this subject. Whisker-Ben, too, was quite eloquent. 'What,'

said he, 'are the moral possessions of a woman? I answer, bank-notes, bonds, sound stocks, and other *choses in action*. Her physical possessions, I count to be lands and negroes, beauty, a good voice, &c. His distinction was recognised as the true one by everybody but ZAUERKRAOUT, who now wears the red hat in place of Finnikin. He thinks that negroes should be counted among the moral possessions, or, at least, as of a mixed character, moral and physical. I will not trouble you with more of the debate than the summary. An inquiry was made into your qualities, and the chances before you, and you were then rated, and found to be worth seventy-five thousand dollars, the interest of which, at five per cent., being five thousand dollars, it was resolved that you be counselled not to marry any woman whose income is less. A certificate of so much stock in the club will be despatched you to assist in any future operations; as a friend to yourself, not less than to the club, let me exhort you to give heed to its counsels. 'Marriage *is* a valuable consideration." Marry no woman whose income is not quite as good as your own. As a lawyer, in tolerable practice, you may fairly estimate your capital at thirty or forty thousand dollars. If you have a pretty woman near you, before you look at her again, see what she's worth; and lose sight of her as soon as you can, unless she brings in a capital to the concern, equal to your own. Be as little of a boy in these matters as possible. In no other, I think, are you likely to be a boy! Adieu! If you do not see me on the 6th, start for the Green by the 7th. I shall surely be there by the 8th. Barnabas sends his blessing, nor does the pope withhold his. He evidently thinks less unfavorably of you, since his nose has been pronounced out of danger. "Lovingly yours,

"J. O. BEAUCHAMPE, Esq." "W. P. SHARPE.

The wife read the letter slowly. Its contents struck her strangely. It had something in its tone like that of one

whom she had been accustomed to hear. The contents of it were nothing. The meaning was obvious enough. Of the parties she knew nothing. But there was the *sentiment* of the writer, which, like the key-note in music, pervaded he performance—not necessarily a part of its material, yet giving a character of its own to the whole. That key-note was not an elevated one. She looked up. Her husband had been observing her countenance. A slight suffusion flushed her cheek as her eyes met his.

"Who is Mr. W. P. Sharpe," said she, "who counsels so boldly, and I may add so selfishly?"

"He is the gentleman with whom I studied law—one of our best lawyers, a great politician and very distinguished man. He is now up for the assembly, and, as you see, thinks that I can promote his election by my eloquence. What think you, Anna?"

"I think you *have* eloquence, Beauchampe—I should think you would become a very popular speaker. You have boldness, which is one great essential. You have a lively imagination and free command of language, and your general enthusiasm would at least make you a very earnest advocate. There should be something in *the cause*—the occasion—no doubt, and——"

She stopped.

"Go on," said he—"what would you say?"

"That I should doubt very much whether the occasion *here*," lifting up the letter—"would be sufficient to stimulate you to do justice to yourself."

The youth looked grave. She noticed the expression, and with more solicitude than usual, continued:—

"I think I know you, Beauchampe. It is no disparagement to you to say I something wonder how such people as are here self-described should have been associates of yours."

"Strictly speaking they were not," he replied, with something of a blush upon his face. "I know but very little of them. But you are to understand that there is exag-

geration — which is perhaps the only idea of fun that our people seem to have — in the design and objects of this club. It is a lawyers' society, and Colonel Sharpe insisted, the day that I graduated, that I must become a member. I attached no importance to the matter either one way or the other, and readily consented. I confess to you, Anna, that what I beheld, the only night when I did attend their orgies, made me resolve, even before seeing you, to forswear the fraternity. We do not sympathize, as you may imagine. But no more, I fancy, does the writer of this letter sympathize with them. Colonel Sharpe is willing to relax a little from serious labors, and he takes this mode as being just as good as any other. These people are scarcely more than creatures for his amusement."

The wife looked grave but said no more, and Beauchampe sat down to write an answer. This answer as may be supposed, confirmed the story of Whisker-Ben, legitimated all the apprehensions of the club, and assured the writer of the letter that his counsels of "moral prudence" had come too late. He had not only wedded, but wedded without any reference to the possessions, such as had been described as moral, at least by the philosophers of the fraternity.

"My wife," said the letter of the writer — "has beauty and youth, and intellect — beauty beyond comparison — and a grace and spirit about her genius that seem to me equally so. Beyond these, and her noble heart, I am not sure that she has any possessions. I believe she is poor; but really, until you suggested the topic, I never once thought of it. To me, I assure you, however heretical the confession may seem, I care not a straw for fortune. Indeed, I shall be the better pleased to discover that my wife brings me nothing but herself."

The letter closed with the assurance of the writer that he should punctually attend at the gathering, and do his best to maintain the cause and combat of his friend.

"Is this Colonel Sharpe so very much your friend, Beauchampe?" demanded his wife when he had read to her a portion of his letter.

"He has been friendly—has treated me with attention as his pupil—has not spared his compliments, and is what is called a fine gentleman. I can not say that he is a character whom I unreservedly admire. He is a man of loose principles—lacks faith—is pleased in showing his skepticism on subjects which would better justify veneration; and, of the higher sort of friendships which implies a loyalty almost akin to devotion, he is utterly incapable. Seeking this loyalty in my friend, I should not seek *him*. But for ordinary uses—for social purposes—as a good companion, an intelligent authority, Colonel Sharpe would always be desirable. You will like him, I think. He is well read, very fluent, and though he does not believe in the ideals of the heart and fancy, he reads poetry as if he wrote it. You, who do write it, Anna, will think better of him when you hear him read it."

"Do you know his wife, Beauchampe?"

"No—strange to say, I do not. I have seen her; she is pretty, but it is said they do not live happily together."

"How many stories there are of people who do not live happily together; and if true, what a strange thing it is, that such should be the case. Yet, no doubt, they fancied, at the first, that they loved one another; unless, Beauchampe, they were counselled by some such club as yours. If so, there could be no difficulty in understanding it all."

"But with those, Anna, who reject the advice of the club?"

"Can it ever be so with them, Beauchampe? I think not. It seems to me as if I should never be satisfied to change what *is* for what might be. Are *you* not content, Beauchampe?"

"Am I not? Believe me it makes my heart tremble to

think of the brief separation which this election business calls for. Sharpe little knows what a sacrifice I make to serve him."

"And if I read this letter of his aright, he would laugh you to scorn for the confession."

"No! that he *should* not."

"You would not see it, Beauchampe. You are perhaps too necessary to this man. But who is Mr. Calvert—is he an elderly man?—I once knew a very worthy old gentleman of that name. He too had been a lawyer and was a man of talents."

"This is a very young man, I believe; not much older than myself. He does not practise in our counties and I have never seen him. Judge Tompkins brings him forward. You see what Sharpe says is said of him. It will do me no discredit to grapple with him, even should he fling me."

"Somehow, I think well of him already," said the wife. "I would you were with *him*, Beauchampe, rather than against him. Somehow, I do not incline to this Colonel Sharpe. I wish you were not *his* ally."

"What a prejudice! But you will think better of the colonel when you see him. I shall probably bring him home with me!"

The wife said nothing more, but there was a secret feeling at her heart that rendered this assurance an irksome one. Somehow, she wished that Beauchampe might *not* bring this person to his house. Her impression—which was certainly derived from his letter—was an unfavorable one. She fancied, after awhile, that her objection was only the natural reluctance to see strangers, of one who had so long secluded herself from the sight of all; and thus she rested, until Beauchampe was about to take his departure to attend the gathering at Bowling-Green, and then the same feeling found utterance again.

"Do not bring home *any* friends, Beauchampe. I am

not fit, not willing to see them. Remember how long I have been shut in from the world. Force me not into it. Now we have security, husband—I dread change of any kind as if it were death. Strange faces will only give me pain. Do not bring any!"

"What! not Colonel Sharpe! I care to bring no other. I could scarcely get off from bringing him. At least I must ask him, Anna; and, I confess to you, I shall not be displeased if he does decline. The probability is that he will for his hands are full."

She turned in from the gate, saying nothing further on this subject, but feeling an internal hope, which she could not repress, that this would be the case. Nay, somehow, she felt as if she would prefer that Beauchampe would bring any other friend than this.

How prescient is the soul that loves and fears! Talk of your mesmerism as you will, there are some divine instincts in our nature which are as apprehensive of the coming event, as if they were already a part of it. It is as if they see the lightning-flash which informs the event, long before the thunder-peal which, like the voice of fame, comes slowly to declare that all is over.

CHAPTER XVI.

STUMP PATRIOTS.

WERE we at the beginning of our journey, instead of being so far advanced on our way, it would be a pleasant mode of wasting an hour, to descant on the shows and practices of a popular gathering in our forest country. The picture is a strange, if not a startling one. Its more prominent aspects must, however, be imagined by the reader. We have now no time for mere description. The more decidedly narrative parts of our story are finished. As we tend to the denouëment, the action necessarily becomes more rapid and more dramatic. The supernumeraries cease to thrust in their lanthern-long images upon us. This is no place for meditative philosophers; and none are suffered to appear except those who *do* and *suffer*, with the few subordinates which the exigency of the case demands, for disposing the draperies decently, and letting down the curtain.

Were it otherwise — were not this disposition of the parts and parties inevitable — it would afford us pleasure to give a *camera-obscura* representation of the figures, coming and going, who mingle and dance around the great political caldron during the canvass of a closely-contested election:

"Black spirits and white,
Red spirits and gray;
Mingle, mingle, mingle,
You that mingle may.'

And various indeed was the assortment of spirits that assembled to hear liquid argument — and drink it too — on

the present occasion. Fancy the crowd, the commotion, the sharp jest and the wild laughter, most accommodating of all possible readers, and spare us the necessity of dilating upon it. We will serve you some such scene, with all its lights and shadows, on some other more fitting oc casion.

Something, however, is to be shown. You are to sup pose a crowd of several hundred persons, shrewd, sensible people enough, after their fashion — rough-handed men of the woods, good at the plough and wagon — masters of the axe, tree-quellers and hog-killers — a stout race, rugged it may be, but not always rude — hospitable, free-handed — ignorant of delicacies, but born with a strong conviction that much is to be known, much acquired — that they are the born inheritors of much — rights, privileges, liberties — sacred possessions which require looking after, and are not to be intrusted to every hand. Often deceived, they are necessarily jealous on this subject; and, growing a little wiser with every political loss, they come to their patrimony with an hourly-increasing knowledge of its value and its peculiar characteristics. Not much learning have they, but, in lieu of it, they can tell "hawk from handsaw" in all stages of the wind; which is a wisdom that your learned man is not often master of. You may cheat them once, nay, twice, or thrice, for they are frank and confiding; but the same man can not *often* cheat them; and one thing is certain — that they can extract the uses from a politician, and then fling him away, as sagaciously as the urchin who deals in like manner with the orange-sack which he has sucked.

Talk of politicians ruling the American people! Lord love you! where do you find these great rulers after five years? Sucked, squeezed, thrown by, an atom in the dung-heap! Precious few of these men of popular dimensions survive their own clamor. Even while they shout upon their petty eminences, the world has hurried on and left

them; and there they stand, open-mouthed and wondering! Waking at length, they ask, like the shipwrecked traveller on the shore: "Where am I? where is my people?"* *My* people!—ha! ha! ha! There is something worse than mockery in that shout. It is *my* people that speaks, but the voice is changed. It is now *thy* people. The sceptre has departed. Ephraim is no longer an idol among them. They have other gods; and the late exalted politician, freezing on his narrow eminence, grows dumb for ever—stiff, stone-eyed—like the sphinx, brooding in her sinking sands, saying, as it were, "Ask me nothing of what I was, for *now* see you not that I am nothing?"

Precious little of such a fate dreams he, the high-cheeked, sunburnt orator, that now rallies the stout peasantry at Bowling-Green. He thinks not so much of perpetual fame as of perpetual office. He has a faith in office which shall last him much longer than that which he professes to have in the people. He hath not so much faith in them as in their gifts. But he fancies not—not he—that the shouts which now respond to his utterance shall ever refuse response to his summons. He assumes a saving exception in his own case, which shall make him sure in the very places where his predecessors failed. He hath an unctuous way with him which makes his faith confident; and his voice thunders, and his eye lightens; and he rains precious drops among them, which might be eloquence, if it were not balderdash!

"Who is this man?" quoth our young hero Beauchampe, as he listened to the muddy torrent, which, like some turbid river, having overflowed its banks, comes down, rending and raging, a thick flood of slime and foam, bringing along with it the refuse of nauseous places, and low flats, and swampy bottoms, and offal-stalls!

The youth was bewildered. The eloquent man was so

* Years after this was published, even Webster was heard to ask, in this very condition of bewilderment, "Where am *I* to go?"

sure of his ground and auditors—seemed so confident in his strength—so little like a doubting giant—that it was long before Beauchampe could discover that he was a mere wind-bag, a bloated vessel of impure air, that, becoming fixed air through a natural process, at length explodes and breaks forth with a violence duly proportioned to its noisomeness.

"This can not be the man Calvert!" soliloquized our hero. It was not. But, when the wind-bag was exhausted—which, by a merciful Providence, was at length the case—then arose another speaker; and then did Beauchampe note the vast difference, even before the latter spoke, which was at once evident between the two.

"This must be he!" he murmured to himself.

He was not mistaken. The crowd was hushed. The stillness, after those clamors which preceded it, was awful; but was it not encouraging? No such stillness had accompanied the torrent-rushing of those beldame ideas and bull-dog words which had come from the previous speaker. Here was attention—curiosity—the natural curiosity of an audience about to listen to a new speaker, and already favorably impressed by his manner and appearance.

Both were pleasing and impressive. In person he was tall and well made—his features denoted one still in the green and gristle of his youth—not more than twenty-five summers had darkened into brown the light flaxen hair upon his forehead. His eyes were bright and clear, but there was a grave sweetness, or rather a sweet, mild gravity in his face, which seemed the effect of some severe disappointment or sorrow.

This, without impairing youth, had imparted dignity. His manner was unostentatious and natural, but very graceful. He bowed when he first rose before the assembly, then, for a few moments, remained silent, while his eye seemed to explore the whole of that moral circuit which his thoughts were to penetrate.

He began, and Beauchampe was now all attention. His voice was at first very low, but very clear and distinct. His exordium consisted of some general principles which the subjects he proposed to discuss were intended to illustrate, to confirm, and at the same time to receive their own illustration, by the application of the same maxims.

In all this there was an ease of utterance, a familiarity with all the forms of analysis, a readiness in moral conjecture, a freedom of comparison, a promptness of suggestion, which betrayed a mind not only excellent by nature, but admirably drilled by the severest exercise of will and art.

We do not care to note his arguments, or the particular subjects which they were intended to elucidate. These were purely local in their character, and were nowise remarkable, excepting as, in their employment, the speaker showed himself everywhere capable of rising to the height of those principles by which the subject was governed. This habit of mind enabled him to simplify his topic to the understanding of his audience; to disentangle the mysteries which the dull brains and rabid tongue of the previous speaker had involved in a seemingly inextricable mass; and to unveil, feature by feature, the perfect image of that leading idea which he had set out to establish.

In showing that Mr. Calvert argued his case, it is not to be understood, however, that he was merely argumentative. The main points of difficulty discussed, he rose, as he proceeded, into occasional flights of eloquence, which told with the more effect, as they were made purely subordinate to the *business* of his speech. Beauchampe discovered, with wonder and admiration, the happy art which had so arranged it; and from wonder and admiration he sank to apprehension, when, considering the equal skill of the debater and the beauty of his declamation, he all at once recollected, toward the close, that it was allotted to him to take up the cudgels and maintain the conflict for his friend.

But this was not a moment to feel fear. Beauchampe was a man of courage. His talent was active, his mood fiery, his imagination very prompt and energetic. He, too, was meant to be an orator; but he had gone through no such school of preparation as that of the man whom he was to answer. But this did not discourage him. If he lacked the exquisite finish of manner, and the logical relation of part with part, which distinguished the address of his opponent, he had an irresistible impulse of expression. Easily excited himself, he found little difficulty in exciting those whom he addressed. If Calvert was the noble steed of the middle ages, caparisoned in chain-armor, and practised to wheel, and bound, and rear, and recoil, as the necessities of the fight required—then was Beauchampe the light Arabian courser, who, if he may not combat on equal terms with his opponent, at least, by his agility and unremitting attack, keeps him busy at all points in the work of defence. If he gives himself no repose, he leaves his enemy none. Now here, now there, with the rapidity of lightning, he fatigues his heavily-armed foe by the frequency of his evolutions—he himself being less encumbered by weight and armor, and being at the same time more easily refreshed for a renewal of the fight.

Such was the nature of their combat which lasted, at intervals, throughout the day. Beauchampe had made his debut with considerable eclat. His heart was bounding with the excitement of the conflict. The friends of Colonel Sharpe were in ecstacies. They had been dashed by the superior eloquence of the new assailant. They feared and felt the impression which Calvert had made; and, expecting nothing from so young a beginner as Beauchampe, they naturally exaggerated the character of his speech, when they found it so far to exceed their expectations. The compliments which he received were not confined to the friends of Colonel Sharpe. The opposition confessed his excellence, and Calvert himself was the first, when it was

over, to come forward, make the acquaintance, and offer his congratulations.

Colonel Sharpe arrived that night. As soon as this fact was ascertained, Beauchampe prepared to return home. Sharpe had brought with him two friends, both lawyers, men of some parts, who rendered any further assistance from our young husband unnecessary. The resolution of the new bridegroom so soon to leave the field, provoked the merriment of the veterans.

"And so you are really married? And what sort of a wife have you got, Beauchampe?" demanded Sharpe.

"You can readily guess," said Barnabas, "when you find him so eager to get home without waiting to see the end of the business here."

"Is she young and handsome, Beauchampe?"

"And what are her moral possessions, as defined by Whisker-Ben?" was the demand of Barnabas.

The tone of these remarks, and inquiries was excessively annoying to Beauchampe. There was something like gross irreverence in it. It seemed as if his sensibilities suffered a stab with every syllable which he was called upon to answer. Besides, it was only when examined in reference to the age, appearance and name of his wife, that he became vividly impressed with the painful consciousness of what must be concealed in her history. The burning blush on his cheeks, when he replied to his companions, only served to subject his unnecessary modesty to the usual sarcasms which are common in such cases.

"And you *will* go?" said Sharpe.

"I promised my wife to return as soon as you came, and she will expect me."

"I must see that wife of yours who has so much power over you. Is she so very handsome, Beauchampe?"

"*I* think so."

"And what did you say was her name before marriage?" was the further inquiry.

He was answered, though with some hesitation.

"Cooke, Cooke! You say in your letter that she's wonderfully smart! But, Barnabas, we must judge for ourselves, both the beauty and the wit. Hey, boy! are we not a committee on that subject?"

"To be sure we are—for that matter, Beauchampe could only marry with our consent. He will have to be very civil in showing us the lady, to persuade us to sanction this premature affair."

"Do you hear, Beauchampe?"

"I do not fear. When you have seen her, the consent will not be withheld, I'm sure."

"You believe in your princess, then?"

"Fervently!"

"You are very young, Beauchampe—very young! But we were all young, Barnabas, and have paid the penalties of youth. An age of unbelief for a youth of faith. Thirty years of skepticism for some three months' intoxication. But how soon that gristle of credulity hardens into callousness! How long do you give Beauchampe before he gains his freedom?"

"That," said Barnabas, "will depend very much on how much he sees of wife, children, and friends. If he were now to set off alone and take a voyage to Canton, the probability is he would be quite as much a victim until he got back. Three weeks at home would probably give him a more decided taste for the Canton voyage, and he would take a second, and stay abroad longer. Beyond that there is no need to look; the story always ends in the same way. I never knew a tale which had so little variety."

There was more of this dialogue which we do not care to record. The moral atmosphere was not grateful to the tastes of the young man. Sharpe saw that, and changed the subject.

"You have made good fight to-day—so they tell me. I knew you would. But you should keep it up. Take my

word, another day here would be the making of you. One speech proves nothing if it produces no more."

"I shall only be in the way," said Beauchampe. "You have Barnabas and Mercer."

"Good men and true, but the more the merrier. How know I whom the opposition will bring into the field?"

"They will scarcely get one superior to Calvert."

"So, you like him then?"

"I do—very much. He will give you a hard fight."

"Will he, then?" said Colonel Sharpe, with some appearance of pique; "well! we shall see—Heaven send the hour as soon as may be."

"Be wary," said Beauchampe, "for I assure you he is a perfect master of his weapon. I have seldom even fancied a more adroit or able speaker."

"Do I not tell you you are young, Beauchampe?"

"Young or old, take my counsel as a matter of prudence, and be wary. He will certainly prove to you the necessity of looking through your armory."

"By my faith but I should like to see this champion who has so intoxicated you. You have made me curious, and I must see him to-night. Where does he lodge?"

"At the Red Heifer."

"Shall we go to him, or send for him? What say you, Barnabas?"

"Oh, go to him, be sure. It will have a good effect. It will show as if you were not proud."

"And did not fear him! Come, Beauchampe, if you will not stay and do battle for us any longer, pen a billet of introduction to this famous orator. Say to him, that your friends, Messieurs Sharpe and Barnabas, of whom you may say the prettiest things with safety, will come over this evening to test the hospitality of the Red Heifer. Be sure to state that it is your new wife that hurries you off, or the conceited fellow may fancy that he has made you sick with his drubbing. Ho! Sutton—landlord! what ho! there!"

The person summoned made his appearance.

"Ha! Sutton! How are you, my old boy?—hav'n't seen you since the last flood—and what's to be done down here? What are you going to do? Is it court or country party here—Tompkins or Desha?"

"Well, kurnel, there's no telling to a certainty, till the votes is in the box and counted; but I reckon all goes right, jist now, as you'd like to find it."

"Very good—and you think Beauchampe did well to-day?"

"Mighty onexpected well. He'll be a screamer yet, I tell you."

"There's a promise of fame for you, Beauchampe, which ought to make you stay a day longer. Think now of becoming a screamer! You said a screamer, Sutton, old fellow, didn't you?"

"Screamer's the word, kurnel; and 'twon't be much wanting to make him one. He did talk the boldest now, I tell you, considerin' what he had to work ag'in."

"What! is this Mr. Calvert a screamer too?"

"Raal grit, kurnel—no mistake. Talks like a book."

"And so, I suppose," said Sharpe, in the manner of a man who knows his strength and expects it to be acknowledged, "and so I suppose you look for me to come out in all my strength? You will require me to talk like two books?"

"Jist so, kurnel, the people's a-looking for it; and it's an even bet with some, that you can't do better than this strange chap, Calvert."

"But there are enough to take up such a bet? Are there not, old fellow?"

"Well, I reckon there are; but you know how a nag has to work when the odds are even."

"Ay, ay! We must see this fellow, that's clear. We must measure his height, breadth, and strength, beforehand.

No harm to look at any one's enemy the night before fighting him, Sutton, is there ?"

"None in natur', kurnel. It's a sort o' right one has to feel the heft of the chap that wants to fling him."

"Even so, old boy—so get us pen, ink, and paper, here, while Beauchampe writes him a sort of friendly challenge. I say, Sutton, the Red Heifer is against us, is she ?"

"I reckon it's the Red Heifer's husband, kurnel," said the landlord, as he placed the writing materials. "If 'twas the Red Heifer herself, I'm thinking the vote would be clear t'other way."

"Ha! ha! you wicked dog!" exclaimed Sharpe, with a chuckle of perfect self-complacence; "I see you do not easily forget old times."

"No, no, kurnel!—a good recollection of old times is a sort of Christian duty: it sort o' keeps a man in memory of friends and inimies."

"But the Red Heifer was neither friend nor enemy of yours, Sutton ?"

"No, kurnel, but the Heifer's husband had a notion that 'tworn't any fault of mine that she worn't."

"Ah, you sad dog!" said Sharpe, flatteringly.

"A leetle like my customers, kurnel," responded the landlord, with a knowing leer.

"I would I could see her, though for a minute only.'

"That's pretty onpossible. He's strict enough upon her now-a-days; never lets her out of sight, and watches every eye that looks to her part of the house. He'd be mighty suspicious of *you*, if you went there."

"But he has no cause, Sutton!"

"Well, *you say so*, kurnel, and I'm not the man to say otherwise; but he thinks very different, I can tell you. He ain't the man to show his teeth; but, mark me, his eye won't leave you from the time you come, to the time you quit."

"We'll note him, Sutton. Ready, Beauchampe?"

The youth answered by handing the note to the landlord, by whom it was instantly despatched according to its direction. A few moments only had elapsed, when an answer was received, acknowledging the compliment, and requesting to see the friends of Mr. Beauchampe at their earliest leisure.

"This is well," said Sharpe. "I confess my impatience to behold this formidable antagonist. Bestir yourself, Barnabas, with that toddy, over which you seem to have been saying the devil's prayers for the last half-hour! Be sure and bring a hatful of your cigars along with you. The Red Heifer, I suspect, will yield us nothing half so good. Ho, Beauchampe! are you sleeping?"

A slap on the shoulder aroused Beauchampe from something like a waking dream, and he started to his feet with a bewildered look. He had been thinking of his wife, and of the cruel portions of her strange history — to which, as by an inevitable impulse, the equivocal dialogue between Sharpe and the landlord seemed to carry him back.

"Dreaming of your wife, no doubt! Ha! ha! — Beauchampe, how long will you be a boy?"

Why did these words annoy Beauchampe? Was there anything sinister in their signification? Why did those tones of his friend's voice send a shudder through the youth's veins? Had he also his presentiments? We shall see. At all events, his dream, whatever may have been its character, was thoroughly broken. He turned to the land lord, and ordered his horse to be got instantly.

"You will go, then?" said Sharpe.

"Yes; you do not need me any longer."

"You are resolved, then, not to be a screamer! What a perverse nature! Here is Fame, singing like the ducks of Mrs. Bond, 'Come and catch me' — and d—l a bit he stirs for all their invitation! But he's young, Barnabas, and has a young wife not five weeks old. We must be

indulgent, Barnabas. We must not be too strict in our examination."

"We were young ourselves once," said Barnabas, kindly looking to Beauchampe.

"But do not be precipitate, old fellow. Though mercifully inclined, it must be real beauty, and genuine wit, that shall save our brother. Our certificate will depend on that. Beauchampe, look to see us to dinner day after to-morrow."

"I shall expect you," said Beauchampe, faintly, as, bidding them farewell, he left the room.

"Ha! ha! ha! poor fellow!" said Sharpe. "His treasures make him sad. He is just now as anxious and apprehensive as an old miser of seventy."

"Egad, he little dreams, just now, how valuable the club will be to him a few months hence," said Barnabas.

"Everything to him. Let us drink 'The club,' Barnabas." And they filled, and bowed to each other, *hob-a-nob*.

"*The* club!"

"The *pope!*"

"And the pope's wife!"

"No go, that!" said Sharpe. "Antiques are masculine only. She's dead to us; she's too old."

"What say you to this wife of Beauchampe, then?"

"We won't drink *her* until we see her; though I rather suspect she must be pretty, for he has an eye in his head. But what a d——d fool to leap so hurriedly, without once looking after the consideration! That was a woful error! —only to be excused by her superexcellence. We shall see in season; though, curse me, if I do not fancy he'd rather see the devil than either of us! He's jealous already. Did you observe how faintly he said, 'Good-night' —and how coldly he gave his invitation? But we'll like his wife the better for it, Barnabas. 'When the hus-

band's jealous, the wife's fair game.' Thus saith the proverb."

"And a wholesome one! But—did we drink? I'm not sure that we have not forgotten it."

And the speaker explored the bottom of the pitcher, and knew not exactly which had deceived him, his memory or his palate.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SAGE AND HIS PUPIL.

In one of the apartments of the Red Heifer, wo persons were sitting about this time. One of these was the orator whose successes that day had been the theme of every tongue. The other was a man well stricken in years, of commanding form, and venerable and intellectual aspect. His hair was long and white, while his cheeks were yet smooth and even rosy, as if they spoke for a well-satisfied conscience and gentle heart in their proprietor.

The eyes of the old man were settled upon the young one. There was a paternal exultation in their glance, which sufficiently declared the interest which he felt in the fortunes and triumphs of his companion. The eyes of the youth were fixed with something of inquiry upon the note of Beauchampe, which he still turned with his fingers. There was something of doubt and misgiving in the expression of his face; which his companion noted, to ask:—

"Is there nothing in that note, William, besides what you have read? It seems to disturb you."

"Nothing, sir; nor can I say that it disturbs me exactly. Perhaps every young beginner feels the same disquieting sort of excitement when he is about to meet his antagonist for the first time. You are aware, sir, that this gentleman, Colonel Sharpe, is the Coryphæus of the opposition. He

is the right-hand man of Desha, and has the reputation of being one of the ablest lawyers and most popular orators in the state."

"You need not fear him, my son," said the elder; "I am now sure of your strength. You will not fail—you can not. You have your mind at the control of your will; and it needs only that you should go and be sure of opposition. Had that power but been mine—but it is useless now! I enjoy my own hoped-for triumphs in the certainties of yours."

"So far, sir, as the will enables us to prove what we are, and have in us, so far I think I may rely upon myself. But the mere will to perform is not always—perhaps not often—the power. This man Sharpe brings into the field more than ordinary talents. Hitherto, with the exception of this young man Beauchampe, all my opponents have been very feeble men—mere dealers in rhodomontade of a very commonplace sort. Beauchampe, who is said to have been a pupil of Colonel Sharpe, was merely put forward to-day to speak against time. This fact alone shows the moderate estimate which they put upon his abilities: and yet what a surprising effect his speech produced—what excitement, what enthusiasm! Besides, it was evi dently unpremeditated; for it was, throughout, an answer to mine."

"But it was no answer: it was mere declamation."

"So it was, sir; but it was declamation that sounded very much like argument, and had the effect of argument. It is no small proof of a speaker's ability, when he can enter without premeditation upon a subject—a subject, too, which is decidedly against him—and so discuss it—so suppress the unfavorable and so emphasize the favorable parts of his cause—as to produce such an impression. Now, if this be the pupil of Colonel Sharpe, and so little esteemed as to be used simply to gain time, what have we to expect, what to fear, from the presence of the master?"

"Fear nothing, William! nay, whatever you may say here, in cool deliberate moments, you can not fear when you are there! That I know. When you stand before the people, and every voice is hushed in expectation, a different spirit takes possession of your bosom. Nothing then can daunt you. I have seen the proofs too often of what I say; and I now tell you that it is in your power to handle this Colonel Sharpe with quite as much ease and success as you have handled all the rest. Do not brood upon it with such a mind, my son—do not encourage these doubts. To be an orator you must no more be liable to fear than a soldier going into battle."

"Somehow, sir, there are certain names which disturb me—I have met with men whose looks had the same effect. They seem to exercise the power of a spell upon my mind and frame."

"But you burst from it?"

"Yes, but with great effort."

"It matters nothing. The difficulty is easily accounted for, as well as the spell by which you were bound. That spell is in your own ardency of imagination. Persons of your temperament, for ever on the leap, are for ever liable to recoil. Have you never advanced impetuously to grasp the hand of one who has been named to you, and then almost shrunk away from his grasp, as soon as you have beheld his face? He was a phlegmatic, perhaps; and your warm nature recoiled with a feeling of natural antipathy from the repelling coldness of his. The man who pours forth his feelings under enthusiastic impulses is particularly liable to this frigid influence. A deliberate matter-of-fact question, at such a moment—the simplification into baldness of the subject of his own inquiry, by the lips of a cynic—will quench his ardor, and make him shrink within his shell, as a spirit of good may be supposed to recoil from the approach of a spirit of evil. Now, you have just enough of this enthusiasm to be sensible ordinarily to this influence.

You acknowledged it only on ordinary occasions, however. At first, I feared its general effect upon you. I dreaded lest it should enfeeble you; but I soon discovered that you had a will, which, in the moment of necessity, could overcome it quite. As I said before, when you are once before the crowd, and they wait in silence for your utterance, you are wholly a man! I have no fears for you, William—I believe in no spells—none, at least, which need to trouble you. I know that you have no reason to fear, and I know that you will not fear when the time comes. Let me predict for you a more complete triumph to-morrow than any which has happened yet."

"You overrate me, sir. All I shall endeavor to do will be to keep what ground I may have already won. I must not hope to make any new conquests in the teeth of so able a foe."

"That is enough. To maintain your conquests is the next thing to making them; and is usually a conquest by itself. But you will do more—you can not help it. You have the argument with you, and that is half the battle. Nay, it is all the battle to a mind so enthusiastic as yours in the cause of truth. The truth confers a strange power upon its advocate. Nay, I believe it is from the truth alone that we gather the last best powers of eloquence. I believe in the realness of no eloquence unless it comes from the sincerity of the orator. To make me believe, the speaker must himself believe."

"Or seem to do so."

"I think I should detect the seeming. Nay, after a little while, the people themselves detect it, and the orator sinks accordingly. This is the fate of many of our men who begin popularly. With politics, *for a profession*, no man can be honest or consistent long. He must soon trade on borrowed capital. He soon deals in assignats and false papers. He endorses the paper of other men, sooner than not issue; and in doing business at all hazards, he soon

incurs the last—bankruptcy! Political bankruptcy is of all sorts the worst. There is some chance of regaining caste, where it is lost by dishonesty—but never where it follows from a blunder. The knave is certainly one thing, but the blunderer may be both. The fool and knave united are incorrigible. Such a combination is too monstrous for popular patience. And how many do we see of this description. I do not think there is in any profession under the sun such numerous examples of this combination. Every day shows us persons who toil for power and place with principles sufficiently flexible to suit any condition of things; and yet they fail, and expose themselves. This is the wonder—that, unfettered as they make themselves at the beginning, they should still become bondsmen, and so, convict! They seem to lack only one faculty of the knave—and that the most necessary—art."

"Their very rejection of law enslaves them. That is the reason. They set out in a chain, which increases with every movement—which seems momently to multiply its own links and hourly increase its weight. Falsehood is such a chain. You can not convict a true man, for the simple reason that his feet are unimpeded from the first. A step in error is a step backward, which requires two forward before you can regain what is lost. How few have the courage for this. It is so much easier to keep on—so difficult to turn! This chain—the heavy weight which error is for ever doomed to carry—produces a stiffness of the limbs—a monstrous awkwardness—an inflexibility, which exposes its burdens whenever it is checked, compelled to leap aside, or attempt any sudden change of movement. This was the great difficulty of this young man, Beauchampe, in the discussion to-day: he scarcely knew it himself, because, to a young man of ingenuity, the difficulties of the argument on the wrong side, are themselves provocations to error. By exercising ingenuity, they appeal flatteringly to one's sense of talent; and, in proportior as

he may succeed in plausibly relieving himself from these difficulties of the subject, in the same proportion will he gradually identify himself with the side he now espouses. His mind will gradually adopt the point of view to which its own subtleties conduct it; and, in this way will it become fettered, possibly to the latest moment of his existence. There is nothing more important to the popular orator than to have Truth for his ally when he *first* takes the field. Success, under such auspices, will commend her to his love, and the bias, once established, his faith is perpetual."

"True, William, but you would make this alliance accidental. It must be the result of choice to be worth anything. We must love Truth, and seek her, or she does not become our ally."

"I wish it were possible to convince our young beginners everywhere, not only that Truth is the best ally, but the only one that, in the long run, can possibly conduct us to permanent success."

"This is not so much the point, I think, as to enable them to detect the true from the false. Very few young men are able to do this before thirty. Hence the error of forcing them into public life before that period. You will seldom meet with a very young person who will deliberately choose the false in preference to the true, from a selfish motive. They are beguiled into error by those who are older. It is precisely in politics as in morals. The unsuspecting youth, through the management of some cold, cunning debauchee, into whose hands he falls, finds himself in the embrace of a harlot, at the very moment when he most dreams of beatific love. The inner nature, not yet practised to defend itself, becomes the prey of the outer; and strong indeed must be native energies which can finally recover the lost ground, and expel the invader from his place of vantage."

"The case is shown in that of this young man, Beauchampe. It is evidently a matter of no moment to him on

which side he enlists himself just now. There is no truth involved in it, to his eyes. It is a game of skill carried on between two parties; and his choice is determined simply by that with which he has been familiar. He is used by Sharpe, who is an older man, and possessed of more experience, to promote an end. He little dreams that, in doing so, he is incurring a moral obligation to maintain the same conflict through his whole career."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MEETING OF THE WATERS — AN EXPLOSION.

At this stage of the conversation, the two companions were interrupted by the sudden entrance of a sly-looking little deformity of a man, the landlord of the Red Heifer, who, in somewhat stately accents, announced the approach of Colonel Sharpe and his friend Mr. Barnabas. The two gentlemen rose promptly, expressed their pleasure at the annunciation, and begged the landlord to introduce the visiters.

In a few moments this was done, though it was found that they were not the only guests. They were followed closely by a group of ten or a dozen substantial yeomen of the neighborhood — persons who never dreamed, in the unsophisticated region of our story, that they were guilty of any trespass upon social laws in thus pressing uninvited into a gentleman's private apartments. Our simple republicans supposed that, because they had a motive, they had also a sufficient plea in justification. Their object was, to be present at the first meeting of the rival candidates, when, they fancied, that there would be a keen encounter of wits, and such a display of the respective powers of the opponents as would enable them to form a judgment in respect to the parties, for one or other of whom they would be required to cast their votes.

The intrusion was of a sort to offend nobody. The pub-

lic men were used to such familiarities, particularly at public hotels; and the *people* somewhat presumed upon the dependence of the candidates upon their support, which would make them quite careful neither to take nor to give offence.

The two gentlemen, accordingly, as the crowd made its appearance, welcomed all parties; while the yeomen, ranging themselves about the entrance, suffered the invited guests to pass beyond them into the centre of the room.

William Calvert, our young orator, felt a rising emotion at his heart, which was not, as he fancied, exactly the result of his mental humility. It was, on the contrary, rather the proof of a strong craving, an intense ambition, which, aiming at the highest, naturally felt some misgivings of its own strength and securities when about to measure, for the first time, with a champion who was already famous. We have seen how these misgivings had troubled him in the previous dialogue, and have heard how his venerable companion had endeavored to strengthen him against them.

The labor was perhaps an unnecessary one. The young man's quailing was from his own extreme standards, rather than from the height and dimensions of his rival. But the issue between them was not destined to be one of intellect, and, in respect to the keen encounter of the rival wits, our yeomen were doomed to disappointment. But there was to be a trial between them, nevertheless, which probably compensated the hungering expectants for what was withheld.

The huge, beefy landlord of the opposition house, Sutton, now bustled forward, having the arm of Colonel Sharpe within his own. The little, deformed representative of the Red Heifer—*our* house—stationing himself beside Calvert, confronted the rival landlord with an air which exhibited something more of defiance than cordiality. Very bitter, from time immemorial, had been the feuds between the two houses—not so bloody, perhaps, but quite as angry, bitter, and enduring, as those which sundered the factions

of York and Lancaster. Of course, the quarrel between them being generally understood, the defiant demonstrations of the two commanded but little notice. All eyes were rather addressed to the rival politicians who were about to meet.

Mr. Barnabas, with bow and smirk, drew near to the elder Calvert, who extended his hand to him very courteously, received his gripe, and with him turned to the younger Calvert, to whom Colonel Sharpe was approaching at the same time. As the parties were about to meet, the colonel, shaking off the arm of his landlord, extended his hand to the rival:—

"Mr. Calvert, I believe. I am Colonel Sharpe."

The hand of William Calvert was extended to receive that of Sharpe, when it was suddenly drawn back. The light was now streaming full on the face of Sharpe. In that of William Calvert, the expression instantly became one of mingled astonishment and loathing. His hands were thrown behind his back, while, drawing his person up to its fullest height, he exclaimed, with a voice of equal surprise and scorn—

"You, sir, Colonel Sharpe—you!"

The effect was a mute wonder in the circle.

Sharpe started, his cheek paling, his eye flashing, at the unexpected reception. The audience was confounded to expecting silence. Sharpe himself was so surprised as not to be able to recover speech immediately. He did, however, in a moment after, and said:—

"What is this? I *am* Colonel Sharpe. And you, sir—are you not Mr. Calvert?"

"Ay, sir; and, as Mr. Calvert, I can not *know* Colonel Sharpe."

These words were spoken in hoarse, almost choking accents, but full of determination. The heart of the speaker was swelling with indignation; his brain was fired with terrible reminiscences; his cheek was flushed with inexpres-

sible passion; his eyes darted glances of most withering scorn, hate, loathing, full in the face of his opponent.

And thus stood the two for a moment. For that space, all was mute consternation in the circle. At length, old Calvert found his voice, though almost in a whisper, and, drawing close to the young man, he said:—

"What do you mean, my son? Wherefore this strange anger? Who is this man, and why—"

Young Calvert had only time to say—"What, sir! do you not see?—" when Sharpe, fully recovered from his momentary surprise, came forward with Barnabas, and, with rising accents, formally demanded an explanation.

"You must explain, sir—explain!" said Mr. Barnabas. "Why, sir, do you say that you can not know my friend?"

"For the simple reason, sir, that I know him too well already," was the answer, made with a successful effort to speak in distinct and resolute tones.

"Ha!" exclaimed Sharpe—"know *me?*"

"Ay, sir! as a villain—a base, consummate villain!"

All was confusion again.

Sharpe, with prompt fury, darted upon the speaker, putting forth all his strength of sinew for the grapple. But he was not the man, physically, to deal with Calvert. The latter seized him with a gripe of iron, and, with a moderate effort of muscle, flung him off, staggering, among the group near the door. This performance exhibited such a degree of strength as amply satisfied all the spectators that Calvert might well scorn such an assailant in that sort of encounter.

Sharpe did not fall—was perhaps saved from falling by the interposing crowd. He soon recovered himself, and was rushing forward to renew his hopeless attempt, when his friend Barnabas threw his arms around him, and held him back.

"Unhand me, Barnabas! unhand me, I say! Shall I submit to a blow?"

"Surely not, Sharpe. But this is not the way."

For a moment, as if slowly recovering thought, Sharpe paused, then said huskily, and in low tones:—

"You are right. There must be blood! See to it!"

"Stand back! I will see to it."

Then advancing to the other party, Barnabas said:—

"Mr. Calvert, we must have an apology, or a meeting And the apology must be ample, sir; and it must be public, as is the offence."

"Apology, sir!—to that worthless scoundrel? You mistake me, sir, very much, if you suppose that I shall apologize to him, of all men living, whatever the offence! It is possible, too, sir, that you somewhat mistake your friend. He will scarcely demand one—will certainly not *need* one—when he knows *me*—when he recalls the features of one who has already taught him what to fear from an avenger!"

"What does all this mean?" demanded Barnabas; while Sharpe eagerly stretched forward, bewildered—with curious eyes, seeking to distinguish the features of the speaker—a study not much facilitated by the dim light of the two tallow-candles which stood upon the mantel-place.

"Who, then, are you, sir?" continued Barnabas.

"Nay, sir," answered the other, "speak for your friend! Your Colonel Sharpe has, I fancy, as many *aliases* as any rogue of London! Let Colonel Sharpe—if such be, in truth, his name—"

"It is his name, sir, I assure you. Why should you doubt it?"

"I have known him by another, and one associated with the foulest infamy!"

"Ha!" cried Sharpe—beginning, perhaps, to recall an unhappy past.

Calvert turned full toward him.

"Look at me, Alfred Stevens—for such I must still call you—look at me, and behold one who is ready to avenge the dishonor of Margaret Cooper! Ha! villain! do you

start? do you shrink? do you remember now the young preacher of Charlemont?—the swindling, smooth-spoken rogue, who sought out the home of innocence to rob it of peace and innocence at a blow? Once, before this, we stood opposed in deadly strife. Do you think that I am less ready now? Then, your foul crime had not been consummated: would to God I had slain you then!

"But it is not too late for vengeance! Apology, indeed! Will you fight, Alfred Stevens? Say—are you as ready now as when the cloth of the preacher might have been a protection for your cowardice? If you *are*, say to your friend here that apology between *us* is a word of vapor, and no meaning. Atonement—blood only—nothing less will suffice!"

Sharpe, staggered at the first address of the speaker, had now recovered himself. His countenance was deadly pale. His eyes wandered. He had been stunned by the suddenness of Calvert's revelations. But the eyes of the crowd were upon him. Murmurs of suspicion reached his ears. It was necessary that he should take decided ground. Your politician must not want audacity. Nay, in proportion to his diminished honesty, must be his increase of brass. To brazen it out was his policy; and, by a strong effort, regaining his composure, he quietly exclaimed, looking round him as he spoke:—

"The man is certainly mad. I know not what he means."

"Liar! this will not serve you. You shall not escape me. You do not deceive *me*. You *shall not* deceive these people. Your words may deny the truth of what I say, but your pallid cheeks confess it. Your hoarse, choking accents, your down-looking eyes, confess it. The lie that is spoken by your tongue is contradicted by all your other faculties. There is no man present who does not see that you tremble in your secret soul; that I have spoken nothing but the truth; that you are the base villain—the de-

stroyer of beauty and innocence — that I have pronounced you!"

"This is strange, very strange!" said Mr. Barnabas.

"The man is certainly mad," continued Sharpe, "or this is a political charge intended to destroy me. A poor, base trick, this of yours, Mr. Calvert. It will have no effect upon the people. They understand that sort of thing too well."

"They *shall* understand it *better*," said Calvert. "They shall have the whole history of your baseness. Political trick, indeed! We leave that business to you, whose very life has been a lie. My friends—"

"Stay, sir," said Barnabas. "There is a shorter way to settle this. My friend has wronged you, you say. He shall give you redress. There need be no more words between us."

"Ay, but there must. The redress, of course; but the words shall be a matter of course, also. You shall hear my charge against this man renewed. — I pronounce him a villain, who, under the name of Alfred Stevens, five years ago made his appearance in the village of Charlemont, and, pretending to be a student of divinity, obtained the confidence of the people; won the affections of a young lady of the place, dishonored and deserted her. This is the charge I make against him, which will be sustained by this venerable man, and for the truth of which I invoke the all-witnessing Heaven. Alfred Stevens, I defy you to deny this charge."

"It is all false as hell!" was the husky answer of the criminal.

"It is true as heaven!" said Calvert, and his asseveration was now confirmed by that of the aged man by whom he was accompanied.

Nor were the spectators unimpressed by the firm, unbending superiority of manner possessed by Calvert over that of Sharpe, who was wanting in his usual confidence.

and who, possibly from the suddenness of the charge, and possibly from a guilty conscience, failed in that promptness and freedom of utterance which, in the case of his accuser, was greatly increased by the feeling of scorn and indignation which was so suddenly reawakened in his bosom.

The little landlord of the Red Heifer, about this time, made himself particularly busy in whispering around that it was precisely five years ago that Colonel Sharpe had taken a trip to the south with his uncle, and was absent two thirds of the year.

How much more the Red Heifer might have said—for he had his own wrongs to stimulate his hostility and memory—can only be conjectured; for he was suddenly silenced by the landlord of the opposition-house, who threatened to wring his neck if he again thrust it forward in the business.

But the hint of the little man had not fallen upon unheeding ears. There were some two or three persons who recalled the period of Sharpe's absence in the south, and found it to agree with Calvert's statements. The buzz became general among the crowd, but was silenced by the coolness of Barnabas.

"Mr. Calvert," said he, "you are evidently mistaken in your man. My friend denies your story as it concerns himself. We do not deny that some person looking like my friend may have practised upon your people; but that *he* is not the man he insists. There is yet time to withdraw from the awkward position in which you have placed yourself. There is no shame in acknowledging an error. You are clearly in error: you can not persevere in it without injustice. Let me beg you, sir, for your own sake, to admit as much, and shake hands upon it."

"Shake hands, and with him? No, no, sir! this can not be. I am in no error. I do *not* mistake my man. He is the very villain I have declared him. He must please himself as he may with the epithet."

"I am sorry you persist in this unhappy business, Mr. Calvert. My friend will withdraw for the present. May I see you privately within the hour?"

"At any moment."

"I am very much obliged to you. I like promptness in such matters. But, once more, sir, it is not too late. These gentlemen will readily understand how you have confounded two persons who look something alike. But there is a shade of difference, as you see, in the chin, the forehead, perhaps, the color of the eyes. Look closely, I pray you, for truly I should be sorry, for your own sake, to have you persist in your error."

Mr. Barnabas, in order to afford Calvert the desired opportunity of discerning the difference between the charged and the guilty party, took the light from the mantel and held it close to the face of Sharpe.

"Pshaw!" said the latter, somewhat impatiently, "the fellow is a madman or a fool. Why do you trouble yourself further? Let him have what he wishes."

The voice of Calvert, at the same moment, disclaimed every doubt on the score of the criminal's identity.

"He is the man! I should know him, by day and by night, among ten thousand!"

"You won't confess yourself mistaken, then?" said Barnabas; "a mere confession of error — an inaccurary of vision — the smallest form of admission!"

Calvert turned from him scornfully.

"Very well, sir, if it must be so! Good people — my friends — you bear us witness we have tried every effort to obtain peace. We are very pacific. But there is a point beyond which there is no forbearance. Integrity can keep no terms with slander. Not one among you but would fight if you were called Alfred Stevens. It is the name, as you hear, of a swindler — a seducer — a fellow destined for the high sessions for Judge Lynch. We shall hear of him under some other *alias*. We have assured the young gentle-

man here that we are not Alfred Stevens, and prefer not to be called by a nickname; but he persists, and you know what is to follow. You can all retire to bed, therefore, with the gratifying conviction that both gentlemen, being bound for it, and good Kentuckians, will be sure to do their duty when the time comes. Good-night, gentlemen—and may you sleep to waken in the morning to hear some famous arguments. I sincerely trust that nothing will happen to prevent any of the speakers from attending; but life is the breath in our nostrils, and may go out with a sneeze. Of one thing I can assure you, that it will be no fault of mine if you do not hear the eloquence, at least, of Mr. Barnabas."

"Hurra for Barnabas! hurra!" was the cry.

"Hurra for Barnabas!" the echo.

"Calvert for ever!" roared the trombone in the corner; and the several instruments followed for Sharpe, Calvert, and Barnabas, according to the sort of pipes and stops with which Providence had kindly blessed them.

CHAPTER XIX.

BILLETS FOR BULLETS — HOW WRITTEN.

"I KNOW that this is unavoidable. I know not well, my son, how you could have acted otherwise than you did; and yet the whole affair is very shocking."

Thus began the elder Calvert to the younger, when they again found themselves alone together.

"It is: but crime is shocking; and death is shocking; and a thousand events that, nevertheless, occur hourly in life, are shocking. Our best philosophy, when they seem unavoidable, is, to prepare for them as resolutely as we prepare for death."

"*It may* be death, my son!" said the other with a shudder.

"And if it were, sir, I should gladly meet death, that I might have the power of avenging *her!* O God! when I think of her — so beautiful, so proud, so bright — so dear to me then — so dear to me even now — I feel how worthless to me are all the triumphs of life — how little worth is life itself!"

And a passionate flood of tears concluded the words of the speaker.

"Give not thus way, my son. Be a man."

"Am I not? God! what have I not endured? what have I not overcome? Will you not suffer a moment's weakness — not even when I think of her? O Margaret! but for this serpent in our Eden, what might we not have

been! How might we have loved! how happy might have passed those days which are now toil and hopelessness to me, which are shame and desolation to you! But for this serpent, we had both been happy."

"No, my son, that would have been impossible. But the speculation is useless now."

"Worse than useless!"

"Why brood upon it, then?"

"For that very reason; as one broods over his loss, who does not value his gain. It is thus I think of *her*, and cease to think of these successes. What are they to me? Nothing! Ah! what might they not have been had she been mine? O my father! I think of her—her beauty, her genius—as of some fallen angel. I look upon this wretch as I should regard the fiend. The hoof is wanting, it is true, but the mark of the beast is in his face. It can surely be no crime to slay such a wretch: murder it can not be!"

"You think not of yourself, William."

"Yes!—he may kill me; but thinking of her, the fallen—and of him the beguiler—I have no fear of death—I know not that I have a love of life—I think only of the chance accorded me of avenging her cruel overthrow."

The re-entrance of Mr. Barnabas, interrupted the dialogue. He came to make the necessary arrangements.

"Very awkward business, Mr. Calvert—too late now for adjustment. May I have the pleasure of knowing the name of your friend."

Calvert named Major Hawick, a young gentleman of his party; but the old man interfered.

"*I* will act for you, William."

"You!" said the young man.

"You, old gentleman!" exclaimed Mr. Barnabas.

"Yes," replied old Calvert, with spirit, "shall I be more reluctant than you to serve my friend. This, sir, is my son by adoption. I love him as if he were my own. I love

him better than life. Shall I leave him at the very time when life is perilled. No — no! I am sorry for this affair, but will stand by him to the last. Let us discuss the arrangements."

"You've seen service before, old gentleman," said Barnabas, looking the eulogium which he did not express.

"I, too, have been young," said the other.

"True blue, still," said Barnabas; "and though I'm sorry for the affair, yet, it gives me pleasure to deal with a gentleman of the right spirit. I trust that your son is a shot."

"He has nerve and eye!"

"Good things enough — very necessary things, but a spice of practice does no harm. Now, Sharpe has a knack with a pistol that makes it curious to see him, *if you be only a looker-on.*"

"Let me stop you, young gentleman," said old Calvert; "when I was a young man, such a remark would have been held an impertinence."

"Egad!" said Barnabas, "you have me! Are we agreed then? Shall it be pistols?"

"Yes: at sunrise to-morrow."

"Good!"

"Distance, when we meet," said Calvert.

The place of meeting was soon agreed on, and the parties separated; Barnabas taking his leave by complimenting the "old gentleman," as a "first-rate man of business."

"Of course," said he, "after he had reported to Sharpe the progress of the arrangements; "of course you *were* the said Stevens. I saw that the fellow's story was true at the first jump. It was so like you."

"How if I deny it?"

"I shouldn't believe you. 'Twas too natural. Besides, Whisker-Ben blew you long ago, though he could not tell the girl's name. Where's she now — what's become of her?"

"That's the mystery I should give something handsome to find out; but you may guess, from the spirit this fellow has shown, that it wouldn't do for me to go back to Charlemont. She was a splendid woman!"

"Was she though? I reckon this fellow loved her. He must have done so. He looked all he said."

"He did! The wonder is equally great in his case. He was a sort of half-witted rustic in Charlemont—Margaret despised him—he wanted to fight me before, on her account, and we were within an ace of it. His name was Hinkley—to think that I should meet *in him* the now famous Calvert. Look you, Barnabas! the pistol is a way we had not thought of for laying our orator on his back."

"Will you do it?"

"I must! He leaves me no alternative. He will keep no terms—no counsel. If he goes on to blab this business—nay, he can prove it, you see—he will play the devil with my chances."

"Wing him! That will be enough. The fellow has pluck; and for the sake of that brave old cock, his father, I'd like him to get off with breath enough to carry him farther."

"No, d—n him, let him pay the penalty of his impertinence! Who made him the champion of Margaret Cooper? Were he her husband now—nay, had she even tolerated him—I think I should let him off with some moderate hurt; but I owe him a grudge. You have not heard *all*, Barnabas!"—the tone of the speaker was lowered here, and a deep crimson flush suffused his face as he concluded the sentence—"He struck me, Barnabas—he laid a cowskin over my back!"

"The d—l he did!"

"He did—I must remember *that!*"

"So you must! So you must!"

"I will *kill* him, Barnabas! I am resolved on it! I feel the sting of that cowskin even now?"

"So you must, but somehow, d—n the fellow, I'd like to get him off."

"Pshaw! you are getting old. Certainly you are getting blind. We have a thousand reasons for not letting him off. He's in our way—he's a giant among the opposition—the crack man they have set up against *me*. Even if I had not any personal causes of provocation, do you not see how politic it would be to put him out of the field. It's he or me. If Desha succeeds, I am attorney-general; if Tompkins, Calvert! No—no! The more I think of it, the more necessary it becomes to kill him."

"But, what if he shoots?"

"That he does not—he *did* not at least. You must, at all events, secure me *my* distance. I suppose you will have little difficulty in this respect. The old man will scarcely know anything about these matters."

"You're mistaken—he talks as if he had been at it all his life. I reckon he has fed on fire in his younger days. The choice, of course, is his."

"A little adroitness, Barnabas, will give us what we want. You can *insinuate twelve* paces."

"Yes, that can be done, but ten is more usual. Suppose he adopts ten?"

"That is what I expect. He will scarcely accept *your* suggestion. He will naturally suppose, from what you say, that I practise at *twelve*. This will, very probably, induce him to say ten, and then I have him on my own terms. I shall easily bottle him at that distance."

"And you will really commission the bullet? You *will* kill him?"

"Must!"

"Sleep on that resolution first, Sharpe!"

"It will do no good. It will not change me. This fellow was nothing to Margaret Cooper, and what right had he to interfere? Besides—you forget the cowskin."

"Oh! true—d—n that cowskin! That's the worst part of the business."

"Good night, Barnabas," said Sharpe. "See that I do not oversleep myself.'

"No fear. Good night! Good night! D—n the fellow. Why did he use a cowskin? A hickory had not been so bad. Now will Sharpe kill him to a dead certainty. He's good for any button on Calvert's coat; and there he goes, yawning as naturally as if he had to meet, to-morrow morning, nothing worse than his *hominy!*"

CHAPTER XX.

"FIVE PACES—WHEEL AND FIRE."

It was something of a sad sight to see good old Mr. Calvert, till a late hour that night, brushing up the murderous weapons, adjusting bullets, and cutting out patches, with all the interested industry of a fire-eater. It was in vain that his son—his adopted son, rather, for the reader should know by this time with whom he deals—it was in vain that he implored him to forego an employment which really made him melancholy, not on his own, but the venerable old man's account. Old Calvert was principled against duelling, as he was principled against war; but he recognised the necessity in both cases of employing those modes by which, to prevent wrong, society insists upon avenging it. He would have preferred that William Calvert should not go into the field on account of Margaret Cooper; but, once invited, he recognised in all its excellence the good counsel of Polonius to his son:—

> "Beware
> Of entrance to a quarrel: but being in,
> Bear it that the opposer may beware of thee."

He at least was resolved that William should not go unprepared and unprovided, in the properest manner, to do mischief. In the hot days of his own youth, he had acquired some considerable knowledge of the weapon, and the laws

rather understood than expressed, which govern personal combat as it is, or was, practised in our country. His care was now given, not simply to the condition of the weapons, but the mind of the combatant. The modes by which the imagination is rendered obtuse—the hardening of the nerves—the exercise of the eye and arm—could not be resorted to in the brief interval which remained before the appointed hour of conflict—and something was due to slumber, without which, all exercise and instruction would be only thrown away. But there is much that a judicious mind can do in acting upon the moral nature of the party; and the conversation of old Calvert was judiciously addressed to this point. The young man, who had by this time learned to know most of the habitual trains of thought by which his tutor was characterized, readily perceived his object.

"You mistake, my dear sir," he said, smiling, after the lapse of an hour, which had been consumed as above described; "you mistake if you think I shall fail in nerve or coolness. Be sure, sir, I never felt half so determined in all my life. The remembrance of Margaret Cooper—the sense of former wrong—the loathing hate which I entertain for this reptile—exclude every feeling from my soul *but one*, and that is the deliberate determination to destroy him if I can."

"This very intensity, William, will shake your nerves. No man is more cool than he who obeys no single feeling. Single feelings become intense and agitating from the absence or absorption of all the rest."

"Feel my arm, sir," he said, extending the limb.

"It is firm, *now*, William; but if you do not sleep, will it be so in the morning?"

"Yes—I have no fear of it."

"But you will go to sleep now? You see I have every thing ready."

"No! I can not, sir. I must write. I have much

say, which, to leave unsaid, would be criminal. Do you retire. Hawick will soon be here, who will complete what you have been doing. He is expert at these matters, and will neglect nothing. I have penned him a note to that effect. He will accompany us in the morning. Do you go to bed now. *You* can not, at your time of life, do without sleep and not suffer. It can not affect me—nay, if I did go to bed, it would be impossible, with these thoughts in my mind—these feelings in my heart—that I should close my eyes. I should only toss and tumble, and become nervous from very uneasiness."

Having finished, the old man prepared to adopt the suggestion of the young one. He rose to retire, but the "good night" faltered on his lips. Young Calvert, who was walking to and fro, was struck by the accents. Suddenly turning he rushed to the venerable man, and fell upon his neck.

"Father!—more than father to me!" exclaimed the youth—"forgive me if I have offended you. I feel that I have often erred, but through weakness only, not wilfulness. You have succored and strengthened—you have taught, counselled, and preserved me. Bless me, and forgive me, my father, if in this I have gone against your wishes and will—if I have refused your paternal guidance. Believe me, I have but one regret at this moment, and it grows out of the pain which I feel that I inflict on you. But you will forgive—you will bless me, my dear father, and should I survive this meeting, I will strive to atone—to recompense you by the most fond service, for this one wilfulness!"

"God bless you, my son—God preserve you!" was the only reply which the old man could make. His heart seemed bursting with emotion, and sobs, which he vainly strove to repress, rose in his throat with a choking, suffocating rapidity. His tears fell upon the young man's shoulder while he passionately kissed his cheek.

"God *will* save you," he continued, as he broke away·

and, sobbing as he went from sight, his broken accents might still, for a few seconds, be heard in the reiteration of this one sentence of equal confidence and prayer.

"*That* is done—*that* is over!" said the youth, sinking into a seat beside the table where the writing materials were placed: his hands covered his face for a few moments, as if to shut from sight the image of the old man's agony.

"That word of parting was my fear, good old man!" he continued, after the pause of a few moments—"what a Spartan spirit does he possess! Surely he loves me quite as well as father ever loved son before. Yet, with what strength of resolution he prepares the weapon—prepares to lose me perhaps for ever. I can not doubt that the loss will be great to him. It will be the loss of all. His hope, and the predictions of his hope, are all perilled by this; yet he complains not—he has no reproaches!

"Surely, I have been too wanton—too rash—too precipitate in this business! What to me is Margaret Cooper! Her beauty, her talents, and that fair fame of which this reptile has for ever robbed her! She loved me not—she hearkened not to my prayer of love—to that love which can not perish though the object of its devotion, like a star gone suddenly from a high place at night, has sunk for ever into darkness. I am not pledged to fight her battles—to repair her shame—to bruise the head of the reptile by which she was beguiled.

"Alas! I can not reason after this cold fashion. Is it not because of this reptile that she is nothing to me—and does not this make her defence everything—heighten the passion of hate, and make bloody vengeance a most sacred virtue?

"It does—it must. Alfred Stevens, I can not choose but seek thy life. The imploring beauties of Margaret Cooper rise before me, and command me. I will try! So help me God, as I believe, that the sacrifice of the reptile

that crawls to the family altar to leave its slime and venom is a duty with man—due to the holiest hopes and affections of man—and is praiseworthy in the sight of God! I can not choose but believe this. God give me strength to convert desire into performance!"

He raised the pistol, unconsciously, as he spoke. He pressed it to his forehead. He lifted it in the sight of Heaven, as if, in this way, he solemnized his oath. The grasp of the weapon in his hand suggested a new train of emotion.

"I may fall—I may perish! The hopes of this good old man—my own hopes—may all be set at naught. Can it be that in a few hours I shall be nothing? This voice be silent—this arm cold, unconscious, upon this cold bosom. Strange, terrible fancy!—I must not think of it. It makes me shudder! It is too late for thoughts like these. I must be a man now—a man only. The mere pang—*that* is nothing. But *he*—thrice a father—he will feel threefold pangs which shall be more lasting. Yet, even with him, they can not endure long. Who else? My poor, poor mother!"

He paused—he drew the paper before him—a tear fell upon the unwritten sheet, and he thrust it away.

"There is one other pain! One thought!" he murmured. "These high hopes—these schemes of greatness—these dreams of ambition—stopped suddenly—like rich flowers blooming late, cut down at midnight by the premature frost! Oh! if I perish now, how much will be left undone?"

Once more the youth started to his feet and paced the chamber. But he soon subdued the rebellious struggles of his more human nature. Quieted once more he sought to baffle thought by concentrating himself upon his tasks. Resuming his place at the table, he seized his pen. Letter after letter grew beneath his hands; and the faint gray light of the dawn peeped in at the windows before he had

yet completed the numerous tasks which required his industry.

A tap at the door drew his attention and he opened it to receive his friend, Major Hawick.

"You are ready," said Hawick—"but you seem not to have slept. How's this? You promised me——"

"But *could not* keep my promise. I had much to do, and felt that I could not sleep. I was too much excited."

"That is unfortunate!"

"It will do no harm. With *my* temperament I do things much better when excited than not. The less prepared, the better prepared."

"Where's the old gentleman?"

"He sleeps still. We will not disturb him. We will steal out quietly, and I trust everything will be over before he wakens. I have left a note for him with these letters."

But few moments more did they delay.

William Calvert remedied to a certain extent the fatigue of his night of unrest, by plunging his head into a basin of cold water. The preparations of the party were already made; and they issued forth without noise, and soon found themselves on the field. Their opponents appeared a few moments after.

"A pleasant morning, gentlemen," said Mr. Barnabas. "But how is it I do not see my old friend here, eh? I had a fancy he would not miss it for the world!"

A rustling among the bushes at a little distance, at this moment, saved William Calvert from the necessity of answering the question. There was the old man himself.

"Ah, William!" he said reproachfully, "was this kind?"

"Truly, sir, it was meant to be so. I would have spared you this scene if possible."

"It was *not* kind, William, but you meant kindly. You did not know me, my son. Had I not been here with you, in the moment of danger, I should always have felt as if I had suffered shame."

The youth was touched, and turned aside to conceal his emotion. The friends of the parties approached in conference. The irregularity of Major Hawick's attendance being explained, and excused under the circumstances, he remained as a mere spectator. The arrangements then being under consideration, Mr. Barnabas said casually, and seemingly with much indifference—

"Well, I suppose, sir, we will set them at twelve paces."

"Very singular that you should offer a suggestion on this subject!" was the sharp reply of Mr. Calvert; "this point is with us."

"Oh, surely, surely—but, this being about the usual distance—"

"It is not *ours*, sir," said the other coolly.

"What do you propose, then?"

"Five paces, sir—back to back—wheel and fire within the words one and two."

Colonel Sharpe, who heard the words, started, and grew suddenly pale.

"A most murderous distance, sir, indeed!" said Mr. Barnabas gravely. "Are you serious, sir? Do you really mean to insist on what you say?"

"Certainly, sir: if I ever jested at all, it should not be on such an occasion. These are our terms."

"We must submit, of course," said the other, as he proceeded to place his principal. While doing this, Colonel Sharpe was observed to speak with him somewhat earnestly. Mr. Barnabas, immediately after, again advanced to Mr. Calvert, and said:—

"In consenting to your right, sir, on the subject of distance, I must at the same time protest against it. The consequences, sir, must lie on your head only. I have no doubt that both parties will be blown to the devil!"

Hawick also approached, and whispered the elder Calvert, in earnest expostulation against this arrangement.

"It is impossible for either to escape," he said; "they

are both firm men, and both will fire with great quickness. The distance is very unusual, sir; and, if the affair ends fatally, the reproach will be great."

For a moment the old man hesitated, and looked bewildered. His eye earnestly sought the form of William Calvert, who was calmly walking at a little distance. He was silent for a few seconds; but, suddenly recovering himself, he murmured, rather in soliloquy than in answer to his companion:—

"No, no! it must be so: we must take *this* risk, to avoid a greater. I see through these men; there is no other way to baffle them."

He advanced to Mr. Barnabas.

"I see no reason to alter my arrangement. To a brave man, the nearer the enemy the better."

"A good general principle, sir, but liable to abuse," said Barnabas; "but as you please. We toss for the word."

The word fell to Calvert. The parties were placed, back to back, with a space of some ten feet between—space just enough for the grave of one. With the word, which was rather gasped than syllabled by the old man, William Calvert wheeled. The first instant glance that showed him his enemy drew his fire, and was followed by that of his foe.

In the first few moments after, standing himself, and seeing his enemy still stood, he fancied that no harm had been done. Already the words were on his lips to call for the other pistol, when he felt a sudden sickness and dizziness; his right thigh grew stiffened, and he lapsed away upon the earth, just as the old man drew nigh to his assistance.

The bullet had entered the fleshy part of his hip, and had lodged there, narrowly avoiding the bone.

These particulars were afterward ascertained. At first, however, the impression of the old man, and that of Major Hawick, was, that the wound was mortal. We will not seek to describe the mental agony of the former. It was

now that his conscience spoke in torturous self-upbraidings; and, throwing himself beside the unconscious youth, he moaned as one who would not be comforted, until assured by the more closely-observing Hawick, who, upon inspecting the wound, gave him hope of better things.

Colonel Sharpe was more fortunate. He was uninjured, but he had not escaped untouched. His escape, though more complete than that of Calvert, had been even yet more narrow—the bullet of the former actually barking his skull just above the ear, and slightly lacerating the skin over his organ of destructiveness. So narrow an escape made him very anxious to avoid a second experiment, which William Calvert, feebly striving to rise from the ground, readily offered himself for. But, while the youth spoke, his strength failed him, and he soon sunk away in utter unconsciousness.

Thus ended an affair that promised to be more bloody in its results. Perhaps it would have been, but for the arrangements which old Calvert insisted on. Had the ten paces been acceded, there is little doubt that Sharpe, secure in his practice, would have inflicted a death-wound on his opponent. The alteration of distance, the necessity of wheeling to fire, and a proximity to his enemy so close as to leave skill but few if any advantages, served to disorder his aim, and impair his coolness. It was with no small degree of satisfaction that he departed, leaving his enemy *hors de combat*. We, too, shall leave him, and follow the progress of the more fortunate party; assured, as we are, that the wound of our young hero, though serious, is not dangerous, and that he is in the hands of those who will refuse sleep to their eyelids so long as he needs that they should watch.

It will not materially affect the value of this narrative to omit all further account of that political canvassing by which these parties were brought into a juxtaposition so fruitful of unexpected consequences. It will suffice to say

that, with Calvert removed from the stump, Colonel Sharpe remained master of it. His eloquence that day seemed far more potential, indeed, than on ordinary occasions. No doubt he tried his best, in order to do away with what Calvert had previously succeeded in doing; but there was an *éclat* about his morning's work which materially assisted the working of his eloquence. The proceedings of the previous night, and the duel which succeeded it, were pretty well bruited abroad in the space of a few hours; and when a man passes with success from the field of battle to the field of debate, and proves himself equally the master in both, vulgar wonder knows little stint, and suffers little qualification from circumstances. Nay, the circumstances themselves are usually perverted to suit the results; and, in this case, the story, by the zeal of Sharpe's friends, so far from showing that the quarrel grew from the facts which *did* occasion it, was made to have a political origin entirely —Sharpe being the champion of one, and Calvert of the other party.

It may be readily conjectured that Sharpe himself gave as much encouragement to this report as possible. Bold as he might be, he was not altogether prepared to encounter the odium to which any notoriety given to the true state of the case would necessarily subject him. His partisans easily took their cue from him, and were willing to accept the affair as a sign of promise in the political contest which was to ensue. We may add that it was no unhappy augury. The friends of Sharpe were triumphant, and Desha—one of those *mauvaise sujets* which a time of great moral ferment in a country throws upon the surface, like scum upon the waters when they are broken up by floods, and rush beyond their appointed boundaries—was elevated, most unhappily, to the executive chair of the state.

Thus much is perhaps essential to what should be known of these matters in the progress of our story. How much of this result was due to the unfortunate termination of

Calvert's affair with Sharpe, is difficult to determine. The friends of the former ascribed their defeat to his wounds, which disabled him from the prosecution of that canvass through the state which had been so profitably begun. They were baffled and dispirited. Their strong man was low; and, gratified with successes already won, and confident of the future, Colonel Sharpe closed the night at Bowling-Green by communicating to Beauchampe, by letter, his purpose of visiting him on his return route—an honor which, strange enough to Beauchampe himself, did not afford him that degree of satisfaction which it seemed to him was only natural that it should.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SPECK OF CLOUD UPON THE SKY OF HAPPINESS.

BEAUCHAMPE and his wife sat together beside the open window. It was night—a soft mellowing light fell upon the trees and herbage, and the breeze mildly blew in pleasant gushes about the apartment. In the room was no light. Her hand was in his. Her manner was thoughtful, and, when she spoke, her words were low and subdued as if, in her abstract mood, it needed some effort of her lips to speak.

Beauchampe himself was more moody than his wont. There is always, in the heart of one conscious of the recent possession of a new and strongly-desired object, a feeling of uncertainty. Even the most sanguine temperament, feels, at times, unassured of its own blessings. Perhaps, such feelings of doubt and incertitude are intended to give us a foretaste of those final privations to which life is everywhere certainly subject; and to reconcile us, by natural degrees, to the last dread separation in death. At all events nothing can be more natural than such feelings. Our hearts faint with fear in the very moment when we are revelling in the sober certainty of waking bliss! When Love, hooded and fettered, refuses to quit his cage—when every dream appears satisfied; when peace, fostered by security, seems to smile in the conviction of a reality which promises fullest permanence; and the imagination knows nothing to crave, and even egotism loses its strong passion for

complaint; even then we shudder, as with an instinct that teaches much more than any thought, and knocks more loudly at the door of the heart, than any of its more reasonable apprehensions.

This instinct was at work, at the same moment, in both their bosoms.

"I know not why it is," said Beauchampe, "but I feel as if something were to happen. I feel unaccountably sad and apprehensive. It is not a fear—scarcely a doubt, that fills my mind—nay, for that matter my mind is silent—I strive to think in vain. It is a sort of voice from the soul—a presentiment of evil—more like a dream in its approaches, and yet, in its influence, more real, more emphatic, than any actual voice speaking to my outward ears. Do you ever have such feelings, Anna?"

"I have them *now!*" she answered in low tones.

"Indeed! it is very strange!"

He put his arm about her waist as he spoke, and drew her closer to himself. Her head sunk upon his shoulder. He did not behold them, but her eyes were filled with tears.

How strange were such tears to her! How suddenly had she undergone a change—and such a change! She who had never known fear, was now timid as a child. Love is, before all, the great subduer. It was in an unknown condition of peace and pleasure that the wife of Beauchampe had become softened. Apprehension necessarily succeeds to conquest. There is no courage so cool and collected as that which has nothing to lose; and timidity naturally grows from a consciousness of large, valuable, and easily endangered possessions. Such was the origin of the fear in the bosoms of both.

Certainly they had much to lose! Happiness is always an unstable possession, and we know this by instinct. The union of the two had perfected the union of the two families. Mrs. Beauchampe, the elder, in the very obvious and re-

markable change of manner, which followed the marriage of Miss Cooke with her son, had become reconciled — nay, pleased with the match. Mary Beauchampe was of course all joy and all tears; and even Jane, escaped from the first danger of being swallowed up, was gradually brought to see the intellectual beauties, and the personal also, of her brother's wife, without beholding her sterner aspects.

For the present, Beauchampe lived with his wife's mother, but the two families were together daily. They walked, rode, sang, read, and played together. They made a little world to themselves, and they were so happy in it! The tastes of Beauchampe gradually became more and more refined and elevated under the nicer sway of feminine taste, and those delicacies of direction which none can so well impart as a highly-intellectual woman. He no longer dreamed of such ordinary distinctions as make up the small hopes of witling politicians. To be the great bell-wether of a clamorous flock, for a season, did not now constitute the leading object of his ambition. Far from it. A short month of communion with an enthusiastic, high-souled woman — unhappy, perhaps, that she was so — had wrought as decided a change in his moral nature, as the love which he brought had operated upon hers. They were both changed. But it needs not that we should dwell upon the power of Love to tame, and subject, and elevate the base and stubborn nature. Surely it is no mere fable, rightly read, which makes him lead the lion with a thread. Briefly, there is no human beast that he can not, with the same ease, subdue.

Before meeting with his wife, however, Beauchampe was superior in moral respects to his associates. This must be understood. He had strength of mind and ambition; he was generous, free in his impulses, and usually more gentle in their direction than was the case with his companions. His rudenesses were those of the rustic, whose sensibilities yet sleep in his soul, like the undiscovered gold in the dark

places of the sullen mountain. It was for Love to detect the slight vein leading to these recesses, and to refine the treasure to which it led. Great, in matters of this sort, is that grand alchemist. The model of refiners is he! No Rosicrucian ever did so much to turn the baser metal into gold. Unhappily, as in the case of other seekers after *projection*, it is sometimes the case that the grand experiment finishes *in fumo*, and possibly with a loud explosion.

But it does not become us to jest in this stage of our narrative. Too sad, too serious, are the feelings with which we now must deal. If Beauchampe and his wife are happy, they are so in the activity and excitement of those sensibilities which are the most liable to overthrow. In proportion to the exquisite sweetness of the sensation, is its close approximation to the borders of pain. The joy of the soul which is the source of all the raptures of love, is itself a joy of sadness, and yearning and excessive apprehension. Soon does this apprehension rise to cloud the pleasure and oppress the hope. This is the origin of those presentiments, which say what our thoughts can not say, and in spite of our thoughts. They grew in the bosom of Beauchampe and his wife, along with the necessity which he felt and had declared, of assuming vigorously the duties of his profession. These duties required that he should move into a more busy sphere, and this duty involved the removal of his wife from that seclusion in which, for the last five years, her sensibilities had found safety. This, to her, was a source of terror; and she trembled with a singular fear lest, in doing so—in going once more out into the world she had left, she should encounter her betrayer.

Very different now were her feelings toward Alfred Stevens. For five years had she treasured the one vindictive hope of meeting him with the purpose of revenge. For five years had she moulded the bullets, and addressed them to the mark which symbolized his breast. Her chief prayer in all this time, was, that she might behold him with power

to employ upon him the skill which she had daily shown upon the insensible trees of the forest. To kill him, and then to die, was all that she had prayed for—and now the difference!

In one little month all this had undergone a change. Her feelings had once more been humanized—perhaps we should say *womanized;* for, in these respects, women are more capricious than men, and the transitions of love to hate, and hate to love, are much more rapid in the case of a grown woman than in that of a grown man. As for boys, until twenty-five, they are perhaps little more than girls in breeches—certainly they are quite as capricious. The experience of five years after twenty-five does more to harden the sensibilities of a man, than any other ten years of his life.

Great, indeed, was the change in this respect which Beauchampe's wife had undergone. *Not* to meet Stevens was now her prayer. True, she had sworn her husband, if they did meet, to take his life. But that had been the condition of her hand—that was *before* he had become her husband—before she well knew his value—before she could think upon the risks which *she* herself would incur, by the danger which, in the prosecution of this pledge, would necessarily accrue to *him*. Nor was her change of character less decided in another grand essential. In learning to forget and forgive, she had also learned to forego the early dreams with which her ambitious mind commenced its progress.

"You speak of fame, Beauchampe," she said, even while sitting as we have described, in the darkness, looking forth upon the faint light which the stars shed upon the garden-shrubbery: "you speak of fame, Beauchampe—oh! how I once dreamed of it! Now, I care for it nothing. Rather, indeed, should I prefer, if we could remain here, out of the world's eye, living to ourselves, and secure from that opinion which we are too apt to seek; upon which we too much

depend—which does not confer fame, and but too often robs us of happiness. It is my presentiment, on this very subject, which makes me dread the removal to Frankfort which you contemplate."

"And yet," said he, "I know not how we can avoid it. It seems necessary."

"I believe it, and do not mean to urge you against it. I only wish that it were not necessary. But, being so, I will go with you cheerfully. I am not daunted by the prospect, though it oppresses me. How much more happy, if we could live here always!"

"No, no, Anna, you would soon sicken of this. You would ask, 'Why have I married this rustic?' You will hear of the great men around, and will say, 'He might have been one of them.' Your pride is greater than you believe; you are not so thoroughly cured of your ambition as you think."

"Oh, indeed, I am! I look back to the days when I had a passion for fame as to a period when I was under monomania. Truly, it was a monomania. O Beauchampe, had you known me then!"

"Why had I not? We had been so happy then, Anna—we had saved so many days of bliss, and then—but it is not too late! Anna, there is no good reason why a genius such as yours should be obscured—lost for ever. The world must know it, and worship it!"

"The world?—oh, never!" she exclaimed, with a shudder. "The world is my terror now. Would we could never know it!"

"But why these scruples, dearest?"

"Why? Can you ask, Beauchampe? Do you forget what I have been—what I am?"

"*You are my wife, and I am a man.* Do you think the world will venture to speak a word which shall shame or annoy you?"

"It is not in its speech, but in its *knowledge!*"

"But what will it know? Nothing.'

"Unless we meet with *him*!'"

"And if we do?—"

"Ah! let us speak of it no more, Beauchampe."

"One word only! If we meet with *him*, *he dies*, and is thus silenced! Will it be likely that *he* will speak of *that*, which only incurs the penalty of death?"

"Enough! enough! The very inquiry—the conjecture which you utter, Beauchampe—is conclusive with me that I should not go into the world. With you, as your wife—humble, shrinking out of sight, solicitous only of obscurity, and toiling only for your applause and love—I shall be permitted to pass without indignity—without waking up that many-tongued slanderer that lies ever in wait, dogging the footsteps of ambition. Were I now to seek the praises which you and others have thought due to my genius, I should incur the hostility of the foul-mouthed and the envious. No moment of my life would be secure from suspicion, no movement of my mind safe from the assaults of the caviller. It is one quality of error—nay, even of misfortune—to betray itself wherever it goes. The proverb tells us that murder will have a tongue: it appears to me, that *all* crimes will reveal themselves in some way, some day or other. Better, Beauchampe, that I remain unseen, unknown, than be known as I am!—"

"Better?—but this can not be; you must be seen—you will be known! The world will seek you, to admire. Remember, Anna, that I have friends—numerous friends; among them are some of the ablest men of our profession—of any profession. There is no man better able than this very gentleman, Colonel Sharpe, to appreciate a genius such as yours."

"Do not mock me with such language, Beauchampe! Instead of thinking of the world's admiration, I should be thinking only of its possible discoveries. As for Colonel Sharpe, somehow I have an impression—gathered, I know

not how, but possibly from his letters — that he lacks sincerity. There is a tone of skepticism and levity about his language which displeases and pains me. He lacks heart. I only wonder how you should have sought your professional knowledge at his hands."

"You forget, Anna, that I sought nothing at his hands *but* professional knowledge; and most persons will tell you that I could scarcely have sought it anywhere with greater prospect of finding it. He is one of our best lawyers. As a man, frankly I confess to you, he is not one whom I admire. You seem to me to have hit his right character. He has always seemed to lack sincerity; and this impression, which he made upon me at a very early period, has always kept me from putting more of my heart within his power than was absolutely unavoidable."

"Ah, Beauchampe, a man of your earnest temperament knows not how much he gives. You carry your heart too much in your eyes — in your hand. This is scarcely good policy."

"With *you*, dearest, it was the *only* policy," he said, with a smile, while he pressed her closer to his bosom.

"Ah! with me?—But that is yet to be determined. You know not yet."

"What! are you not mine? Do I not feel you in my arms? do I not embrace you?"

"It may be that you embrace death, Beauchampe!"

"Speak not so gloomily, my love. Why should you yield yourself to such vague and nameless apprehensions? There is nothing to cloud our prospect, which, when I think, seems all bright and cloudless as the night we gaze on!"

"Ah! *when you think*, Beauchampe: but thought is no seer, though an active speculator. You forget these instincts, Beauchampe — these presentiments!"

"I *have* forgotten mine," he answered, livelily.

"Ah! but mine depart not so soon. They rise still, and will continue to rise."

"You brood over—you encourage them."

"No! but they seem a part of me. I have always had them, even in the days of my greatest exultation; when, in truth, I had no cares to suggest them. They have marked and preceded, like omens, all my misfortunes. Should I not fear them, then?"

"Not now: it is only the old habit of your mind which is now active. Gloomy thoughts and complaining accents become habitual; and, even when the sun shines, the eye, long accustomed to the cloud, still fancies that it beholds it gathering blackly in the distance. Now, you are secure. Your cloud is gone, dearest—never, never to return."

"See where it rises, Beauchampe, an image on the night! How ominous, were these days of superstition, would that dark image be of our fortunes! Even as you spoke, with such constant assurance, the evening-star grew faint. Love's own star waned in the growing darkness of the west; love's own star seemed to shroud itself in gloom at the prediction which so soon may be rendered false. Look how fast is the ascent of that gloomy tabernacle of the storm! Not one of the lovely lights in that quarter of the sky remains to cheer us. Even thus, have the lights of my hope for ever gone out. That first light of my soul, which was the morning-star of my being—its insane passion for fame—was thus obscured. Then, the paler gleams of evening, which denoted love; and how fast, after, followed all that troop of smaller lights which betokened the dreams and hopes of a warm and throbbing heart! Ah, Beauchampe! faded, stricken out, not one by one, as the joys and hopes of others, but with a sudden eclipse that swept all their delusive legions at a moment out of sight—never, never to return!"

"Say not, never!"

"Ah! it is my fear which speaks—the long sense of desolation and dread which has made up so many years of my life!—it is this which makes me speak, from a convic-

tion of the past, with a dark, prophetic apprehension of the future. True, that the love blesses me now—a delusive image of which defrauded me before—but how, with the sudden rising of that cloud before my eyes, even in the hour of your boastful speech and perhaps my no less boastful hope—how can I else believe than that another delusion, no less fatal than the past, though now untouched with shame, has found its way to my heart, beguiling me with hope, only to sink me in despair?"

"Ah! why such speech, Anna? *my love* is no delusion," said the husband reproachfully.

"I meant not that, Beauchampe—I believe not that. Heaven knows I hold it as a truth—and the sweetest truth that my soul has ever known in its human experience. But for its permanence I feared. I doubted not that the light was pure and perfect; but, alas! I knew not how soon it might go out. I felt that it was a bright star shining down upon my soul; but I also feel that there is a gloomy storm rising to obscure the star, and leave me in a darkness more complete than ever. O Beauchampe! if we should ever meet that man—"

"He dies, Anna!"

"Oh, no! I mean not that."

"Have I not sworn?"

"Yes! but the exaction of that oath was in my madness—it was impious: I shudder but to think of it. May you never, *never* meet with him."

"Amen! I trust that we may never!"

"Could I but be sure of that!"

"Let it not trouble you, dearest: we *may never* meet with him."

"Ay, but we *may;* and the doubt of that dreadful possibility, flings a gloomy shadow over the dear, sweet reality of the present."

"Be of better cheer, my heart. You are mine. You know that nothing is left for me to learn. You look to me

for love—you depend not upon the world, but upon me. That world, as it can teach me nothing of your value, that can make the smallest approach to the certainties which I feel, so it can report nothing in your disparagement which your own lips have not already spoken. Why then should you fear? At the worst, we can only sink out of the world's sight when its looks irk, or its tones annoy us."

"Ah! that is not so easy, Beauchampe. Once out of the world's eye, nothing is so easy as to remain so. But the world pursues the person who has challenged its regard; and haunts the dwelling where it fancies it may find a spot of shame. Besides, is not *your fame* precious to me as well as to yourself. This profession of yours, more than any other in our country, is that which concentrates upon itself the public gaze. When you have won this gaze, Beauchampe, when you have controlled the eager ears of an audience, and commanded the admiration of an admiring multitude—if, at this moment, some slanderous finger should guide the eye of the spectator from the commanding eminence of the orator to the form of her who awaits him at home, and say, 'What pity!' Ah! Beauchampe!—"

"Speak of it no more," said Beauchampe, and there was a faintness in his accents while he spoke, that made it certain that he felt annoyance from the suggestion. Unwittingly, she sighed, as her keen instinct detected the feeling which her words had inspired. Beauchampe drew her closer to him, forced her upon his knee, and sought, by the adoption of a tone and words of better assurance, to do away with the gloomy presentiments under which her mood was evidently and painfully struggling.

"I tell you, Anna, these are childish fancies!—at the worst, mere womanish fears! Believe me, when I tell you, that the days shall now be bright before you. You have had your share of the cloud. There is no lot utterly void and dark. God balances our fortunes with singular equality. None are all prosperous—none are all unfortunate. If the

youth be one of gloom and trial, the manhood is likely to be bright and cheerful; while he, who in youth has known sunshine only, will, in turn, most probably be compelled to taste the cup of bitterness for which he is wholly unprepared. It is perhaps fortunate for all to whom the bitterness of this cup becomes, in youth, familiar. At the worst, if still compelled to drink of it, the taste is more certainly reconciled to its ungracious flavor. That you have had this poisoned chalice commended to your lips in youth, is perhaps something of a guaranty that you shall escape the draught hereafter. So far from the past, therefore, flinging its huge dark shadow upon the future, it should be regarded as a solemn background, which, by contrast, shall reflect more brightly than were it not present, the gay, gladdening lights which shall gather and burn about your pathway. I tell you, dearest, I *know* this shall be the case. You have outlived the storm—you shall now have sunny skies and smooth seas. Neither this beauty which I call my own, nor these talents which are so certainly yours, shall be doomed to the obscurity to which your unnecessary fears would assign them. I tell you I shall yet behold you, glowing among, and above, the ambitious circle. I shall yet hear the rich words of your song floating through the charmed assembly, at once startling the soul and soothing the still ear of admiration. Come, come—fling aside this shadow from your heart, and let it show itself in all its glory. Look your best smiles, my love—and—will you not sing me now one of those proud songs, which you sang for me the other night—one of those which tell me how proud, how ambitious was your genius in the days of your girlhood? Do not deny me, Anna. Sing for me—sing for me one of those songs."

She began a strain, though with reluctance, which declared all the audacious egotism which is usually felt, if not always expressed, by the ardent and conscious poet. The fame for which she had once yearned—the wild dreams

which once possessed her imagination and influenced her hope—were poured forth in one of those irregular floods of harmony—at once abrupt and musical—which never issue from the lips of the mere instructed minstrel. Truly, it might have awakened the soul under the ribs of death; and the heart of Beauchampe bounded and struggled within him, not capable of action, yet full, as it seemed, of a most impatient discontent. Wrought up to that enthusiasm of which his earnest nature was easily susceptible, he caught her in his arms almost ere the strain was ended, and the thought which filled his mind, arising from the admiration which he felt, was that which told him what a sin it would be, if such genius should be kept from its fitting utterance before admiring thousands. The language of eulogy which he had used to her a few moments before was no longer that of hyperbole; and, releasing her from his grasp, while she concluded the strain, he paced the floor of the apartment, meditating with the vain pride of an adoring lover, upon the sensation which such a song, and so sung, would occasion in the souls of any audience.

The strain ceased. The silence which followed, though deep and breathless, was momentary only. A noise of approaching horses was heard at the entrance; and the prescient heart of the wife sunk within her. She felt as if this visit were a foretaste of that world which she feared; and, hurrying up to her chamber, while Beauchampe went to the entrance, she endeavored, by a brief respite from the trials of reception—and in solitude—to prepare her mind for an encounter, the anticipated annoyance from which was, however, of a very different character from that to which she was really destined.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SNAKE ONCE MORE IN THE GARDEN.

SHE was not suffered to remain long in suspense. The first accents of the strange voice addressing her husband at the door, and which reached her ears in her chamber, proved the speaker to be no stranger. Fearfully her heart sank within her as she heard it. The voice was that of Alfred Stevens! Five years had elapsed since she had heard it last, yet its every tone was intelligible; clear as then; distinct, unaltered—in every syllable the same utterance of the same wily assassin of innocence and love!

What were her emotions? It were in vain to attempt to describe them—there is no need of analysis. There was nothing compounded in them—there was no mystery! The pang and the feeling were alike simple. Her sensations were those of unmitigated horror. "One stupid moment, motionless, she stood," then sunk upon her knees! Her hands were clasped—her eyes lifted to heaven—but she could not pray. "God be with me!" was her only broken ejaculation, and the words choked her.

The trial had come! Her head throbbed almost to bursting. She clasped it with her cold hands. It felt as if the bony mansion could not much longer contain the fermenting and striving mass within. Yet she had to struggle. It was necessary that the firm soul should not yield, and hers was really no feeble one. Striving and struggling to suppress the feeling of horror which every moment threatened

to burst, she could readily comprehend the relief that nature could afford her—could she only break forth in hysterical convulsions. But these convulsions would be fatal—not to herself—not to life, perhaps, for that was not now a subject of apprehension. It would endanger her secret! That was now her fear.

To preserve her equilibrium—to suppress the torments and the troubles of her soul—to keep Beauchampe from the knowledge that the man he had sworn to slay was his friend, and was even now a guest upon his threshold—this was the important necessity. It was this necessity that made the struggle so terrible.

She shook like an aspen in the wind. Her breast heaved with spasmodic efforts that were only not convulsions; her limbs trembled—she could not well walk—yet she could not remain where she knelt. To kneel without submission, while her soul still struggled with divided impulses, was to kneel in vain. The consolation of prayer can only follow the calmness of the soul. That was not hers—could not be. Yet it was necessary that she should appear calm. Terrible trial! She tottered across the room to the mirror, and gazed upon its placid surface. It was no longer placid while she gazed. What a convulsion prompted each muscle of her face! The dilation of those orbs, how could that be subdued? Yet it must be done.

"Thy hand is upon me now!—God be merciful!" she exclaimed, once more sinking to her knees.

"Bitterly now do I feel how much I have offended. Had these five years been passed in prayers of penitence rather than of pride—in prayers for grace rather than of vengeance—it had not been hard to pray now. Thy hand had not been so heavy! Spare me, Father. Let this trial be light. Let me recover strength—give me composure for this fearful meeting!"

She started to her feet. She heard a movement in her mother's apartment. That restless old lady, apprized of

the arrival of the expected visiters, was preparing to make her appearance below. It was necessary that she should be forewarned, else she might endanger everything. With this new fear, she acquired strength. She hurried to her mother's apartment, and found her at the threshold. The impatient old lady, agog with all the curiosity of age, was preparing to descend the stairs.

"Come back with me an instant," said the daughter, as she passed into the chamber.

"What's the matter with you, Margaret? You look as if your old fits were returning!"

"It is likely: there is occasion for them. Know you who is below?"

"To be sure I do. Colonel Sharpe and Mr. Barnabas. Who but them?"

"Alfred Stevens is below! Colonel Sharpe and Alfred Stevens are the same person!"

"You don't say so! Lord, if Beauchampe only knew!" exclaimed the old lady, in accents of terror.

"And if you rush down as you are, he *will* know!" said the daughter sternly. "For this purpose I came to prepare you. You must take time and compose yourself. It is no easy task for either of us, mother, but it must be done. You do not know, for I have not thought it worth while to tell you, that, before I consented to marry Beauchampe, I told him all—I kept no secrets from him."

"You didn't, sure, Margaret?"

"As I live, I did!"

"But that was very foolish, Margaret."

"No!—it was right—it was necessary. Nothing less could have justified me; nothing less could have given me safety."

"I don't see—I think 'twas very foolish."

"Be it so, mother—it is done; and I must tell you more, the better to make you feel the necessity of keeping your countenance. Before I became the wife of Beauchampe, he

swore to revenge my wrong. He pledged himself before Heaven to slay my betrayer whenever they should meet. They have met—they are below together!"

"Lord have mercy, what a madness was this!" cried the old lady, with uplifted hands, and sinking into a chair. Her anxiety to get below was effectually quieted.

"It was no madness to declare the truth," said the daughter gloomily; "perhaps it was not even a madness to demand such a pledge."

"And you're going to tell Beauchampe that his intimate friend and Alfred Stevens are the same—you're going to have blood shed in the house?"

"No, not if I can help it! When I swore Beauchampe to slay this villain, I was not the woman that I am now. I knew not then my husband's worth. I did not then do justice to his love, which was honorable. My purpose now is to keep this secret from him, if you do not betray it, and if the criminal himself can have the prudence to say nothing. From his honor, were that my only security, I should have no hope. I feel that he would manifest no forbearance, were he not restrained by the wholesome fear of vengeance. Even in this respect I have my doubts. There is sometimes such a recklessness in villany, that it grows rash in spite of caution. I must only hope and pray for the best. Ah! could I pray!"

Once more did the unhappy woman sink upon her knees. She was now more composed. Her feelings had become fixed. The necessity of concentrating her strength, and composing her countenance, for the approaching trial, was sufficiently strong to bring about, to a certain extent, the desired results; and the previous necessity of restraining her mother, or at least of preparing her for a meeting, which otherwise might have provoked a very suspicious show of feeling or excitement, had greatly helped to increase her own fortitude and confirm her will. But, from prayer, she got no strength. Still she could not pray. The empty

words came from the lips only. The soul was still wandering elsewhere—still striving, struggling in a moral chaos, where, if all was neither void nor formless, all was dark, indistinct, and threatening.

But little time was suffered even for this effort. The voices from below became louder. Laughter, and occasionally the words and topics of conversation, reached their ears. That Alfred Stevens should laugh at such a moment, while she struggled in the throes of mortal apprehension on account of him, served to strengthen her pride, and renew and warm her sense of hostility. What a pang it was to hear, distinctly uttered by his lips, an inquiry, addressed to *her* husband, on the subject of *his* wife! What feelings of pain and apprehension were awakened in her bosom by the simple sounds—

"But where's your wife, Beauchampe? we must see her, you know. You forget the commission which we bear—the authority conferred by the club. Unless we approve, you know—"

What more was said escaped her, but a few moments more elapsed when Beauchampe was heard ascending the stairs. She rose from where she knelt, and, bracing herself to the utmost, she advanced and met him at the head of the stairs.

"Come," said he, "and show yourself. My friends wonder at your absence. They inquire for you. Where's your mother?"

"I will inform her, and she will probably follow me down."

"Very good: come as soon as possible, for we must get them supper. They have had none."

He returned to his guests, and she to her chamber. Her mother was weeping.

"If you do not feel strong enough, mother, to face these visiters to-night, do not come down. I will see to giving them supper. At all events, remember how much depends

on your firmness. I feel now that I shall be strong enough; but I tremble when I think of you. Perhaps you had better not be seen at all. I can plead indisposition for you while they remain, which I suppose will only be to-night."

The mother was undecided what to do. She could only articulate the usual lamentation of imbecility, that things were as they were.

"It was so foolish to tell him anything!"

The daughter looked at her in silence and sorrow. But the remark rather lifted her forehead. It was, indeed, with the pride of a high and honorable soul that she exulted in the consciousness that she *had* revealed the truth—that she *had* concealed nothing of her cruel secret from the husband who had the right to know. With this strengthening conviction that, if the worst came, she at least had no concealments which could do her harm, she descended to the fearful encounter.

Never was the rigid purpose of a severe will, in circumstances most trying, impressed upon any nature with more inflexibility than upon hers. Every nerve and sensibility was corded up to the fullest tension. She felt that she might fall in sudden convulsion—that the ligatures which her will had put upon brain and impulse might occasion apoplexy; but she felt, at the same time, that every muscle would do its duty—that her step should not falter—that her eye should not shrink—that no emotion of face, no agitation of frame, should effect the development of her fearful secret, or rouse the suspicions of her husband that there *was* a secret.

She achieved her purpose! She entered the apartment with the easy dignity of one wholly unconscious of wrong, or of any of those feelings which denote the memory of wrong. But she did not succeed, nor did she try, to impart to her countenance and manner the appearance of indifference. On the contrary, the solemnity of her looks amount-

ed to intensity. She could not divest her face of the tension which she felt. The tremendous earnestness of the encounter—the awful seriousness of that meeting on which so much depended—if not clearly expressed on her countenance, left there at least the language of an impressiveness which had its effect upon the company.

Beauchampe was aware of enough to be at no loss to account for the grave severity of her aspect. Mr. Barnabas, without knowing anything, at least felt the presence of much and solemn character in the eyes that met his own. As for Colonel Sharpe, he was too much surprised at meeting so unexpectedly with the woman he had wronged, to be at all observant of the particular feelings which her features seemed to express.

He started at her entrance. Looking, just then, at his wife, Beauchampe failed to note the movement of his guest. Sharpe started, his face became suddenly pale, then red; and his eyes involuntarily turned to Beauchampe, as if in doubt and inquiry. His *congé*, if he made any, was the result of habit only. Never was guilty spirit more suddenly confounded, though perhaps never could guilty spirit more rapidly recover from his consternation. In ten minutes after, Colonel Sharpe, *alias* Alfred Stevens, was as talkative as ever—as if he had no mortifications to apprehend, no conscience to quiet: but, when the eyes of Beauchampe and Barnabas were averted, his might be seen to wander to the spot where sat the woman he had wronged!

What was the expression in that glance? What was the secret thought in the dishonorable mind of the criminal? Though momentary only, that glance was full of intelligence: but the recognition which it conveyed found no response from hers; though—not unfrequently, at such moments—as if there were some fascination in his eyes, they encountered those of the person whom they sought, keenly fixed upon them!

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BITTER PARLE.

And thus, after five long years of separation—years of triumph on the one hand, years of degradation and desperation on the other—they met, the destroyer and his victim. The serpent had once more penetrated into the garden. Its flowers had been renewed. Its Eden, for a brief moment, appeared to be restored. If the sunshine was of a subdued and mellowed character, it was still sunshine! Alas for the woman! she gazed upon her destroyer, and felt that the whole fabric of her peace was once more in peril. She saw before her the same base spirit which had so profligately triumphed in her overthrow. She felt, from a single glance, that he had undergone no change. There was an expression in his look, when their eyes encountered, which annoyed her with the familiarity of its recognition. She turned from it with disgust.

"At all events," she thought, "he will keep his secret; he will not willingly incur the anger of a husband. A day will free us from his presence, and the danger will then pass for ever!"

Filled with doubts, racked with apprehension, but still succored by this hope, the woman yet performed the duties of the household with a stern resoluteness that was admirable. No external tokens of her agitation were to be seen. Her movements were methodical, and free from all precipitation. Her voice, though the tones were low, was

clear, distinct, and she spoke simply to the purpose. Even her enemy felt, or rather exercised, a far less degree of coolness and composure. His voice sometimes faltered as he gazed upon, and addressed her; and there was, at mo ments, a manifest effort at ease and playfulness, which the ready sense of Beauchampe himself did not fail to discriminate. It was something of a startling coincidence that, after fighting with William Calvert about Margaret Cooper, he should, the very next night, be the favored guest of her husband! Colonel Sharpe brooded over the fact with some superstitious misgivings; but the progress of supper soon made him forgetful of his fears, if he had any; and, before the evening was far advanced, he had recovered very much of his old composure.

When the supper-things were removed, Mr. Barnabas brought up the subject of horses, in order, as it would seem, to advert to the condition of his favorite roan, which had struck lame that evening on their way from Bowling-Green. The question was a serious one whether he suffered from snag, or nail, or pebble; and the worthy owner concluded his speculations by declaring his wish, at an early moment, to subject the animal to fitting inspection. Beauchampe rose to attend him to the stables.

"Will you go, colonel?" asked Mr. Barnabas.

"Surely not," was the reply. "My taste does not lie that way. I will remain with Mrs. Beauchampe, in the hope to perfect our acquaintance."

The blood rose in the brain of the person spoken of; her heart strove to suppress the rising feeling of indignation. At first, her impulse was to rise and leave the room. But the next moment determined her otherwise. A single reflection convinced her that there would be no good policy in such a movement—that it would be equivalent to a confession of weakness, which she did not feel; and she was resolved that her feelings of aversion should not give her enemy such an advantage over her.

"He must be met, at one time or other; and perhaps the sooner the issue is over, the better."

This reflection passed through her mind in very few seconds. They were now alone together. The lantern, which the servant carried before Beauchampe and Mr. Barnabas, was already flickering faintly at a distance as seen through the window-pane beside her, when Colonel Sharpe started from his seat and approached her.

"Can it be that I again see you, Margaret?" he exclaimed; "have my prayers been granted—am I again blessed with a meeting with one so dearly loved, so long and bitterly lamented?"

"You see the wife of Orville Beauchampe, Colonel Sharpe!" was the expressive reply.

"Nay, Margaret, it is my misfortune that you are *his* wife, or the wife of any man but one. Hear me—for I perceive that you think that I have wronged you—"

"Think, sir, think!—but no more of this!" was her indignant answer, as she rose from her chair and prepared to leave the room; "it can matter little to you, sir, what my thoughts of your conduct and character may be, as it is now small matter to me what they ever have been. It is enough for you to know that you are the guest of my husband; and that, in his ignorance of your crime, lies your only safety. A word from me, sir, brings down his vengeance upon your head! You yourself best know whether that is to be feared or not."

"But you will not speak that word, Margaret!"

"Will I not?" she exclaimed, while a fiery scorn seemed to gather in her eyes.

"No, Margaret, no! I am sure you can not. For the sake of the past, you will not."

"Be not so sure of that! It is for the sake of the future that I am silent. Were it for the past only, Alfred Stevens, not only should my lips speak, but my hands act. I should not ask *of him* to avenge me: my own arm should right my

wrong; my own arm should, even now, be uplifted in the work of vengeance, and you should never leave this house alive!"

He smiled as he replied:—

"I know you better, Margaret. If you ever loved—"

"Stay, sir—stay, Alfred Stevens—if you would not have me so madden as to prove to you how little you have known or can know of me! Do not speak to me in such language. Beware—for your own sake, for my sake, I implore you to forbear!"

"For your sake, Margaret—anything for your sake. But be not hasty in your judgment. You wrong me—on my soul you do! If you knew the cruel necessity that kept me from you—"

"O false!" she exclaimed—"false, and no less foolish than false! Do not hope to deceive me by your base inventions. I heard all—know all! I know that I was the credulous victim of your subtle arts—that my conquest and overthrow was the subject of your dishonest boast."

"It is false, Margaret! The villain lied who told you this."

"No, Alfred Stevens, no!—he spoke the truth. The veracity of the two Hinkleys was never questioned. But your own acts confirmed the story. Why did you not keep your promise? why did you fly? Where have you been for five bitter years, in which I was the miserable mock of those whom I once looked on with contempt—the desperate, the fearful wretch—on the verge of a madness which, half the time, kept the weapons of death within my grasp—which I only did not use upon myself, because there was still a hope that I should meet with you!"

"I am here now, Margaret. If my death be necessary to your peace, command it. I confess that I owe you atonement, though I am less guilty than you think. Take my life, if that will suffice: I offer no entreaty; I utter no complaint."

"One little month go, Alfred Stevens, and you had not needed to make this offer—you had not made it a second time in vain. But that time has changed me. Go—live! Leave this house with the morning's sun, and forget that you have ever known me! Forget, if possible, that you know my husband! It is for his sake that I spare you—for his sake I entreat your silence of the past—your utter forgetfulness of him and me."

"For *his* sake, Margaret!" he answered with an incredulous smile while offering to take her hand. She repulsed him.

"No, no, Margaret! it is impossible that this young man can be anything *to you.* You can not be so forgetful of those dear moments, of that first passion, consecrated as it was by those stolen joys—"

"Remind me not—man or devil!—remind me not. Remind me not of your crime—remind me not of my sworn vengeance—sworn, day by day, every day of bitterness and death which I have endured since those dark and damning hours. Hark ye, Alfred Stevens!"—her voice here suddenly lowered almost to a whisper—"hark ye, you are not a wise man! You are tempting your fate. You are in the very den of danger. I tell you that I spare your life, though the weapon is shotted—though the knife is whetted. I spare your life, simply, on condition that you depart. Linger longer than is absolutely needful—vex me longer with these insolent suggestions—and you wake into fury the slumbering hatred of my soul, which, for five years, has known no moment's sleep till now. See!—the light returns—a word—a single word more by way of warning—depart by the dawn to-morrow. Linger longer, and you may never depart again!"

"Why, Margaret, this is downright madness!"

"So it is; and I *am* mad, and can not be otherwise than mad, while you remain here. Do you not fear that my madness will turn upon and rend you."

"No!" he said quietly, but earnestly and in subdued tones, for the light was now rapidly approaching. "No, Margaret, for I can not believe in such sudden changes from love to hate. Besides, if it were true, of what profit would it be to take this vengeance? It would forfeit all the peace and happiness which you now enjoy!"

"Do I not know it? Is not this what I would tell you? Do I not entreat you to spare me, for this very reason? To rend and destroy *you* might gratify *my* vengeance, but it would overthrow the peace of others who have become dear to me. I ask you to spare *them*—to spare *me*—not to provoke me to that desperation which will make me forgetful of everything except the wrong I have suffered at your hand and the hate I bear you."

"But how do I this, Margaret?"

"Your presence does it."

"I can not think you hate me."

"Ha! indeed! you can not? Do not, I pray you, trust to that. You deceive yourself. You do! Leave this house with the morrow. Break off your intimacy with Beauchampe. Forget me! Look not at me! Provoke me not with your glance—still less with your accents; for, believe me, Alfred Stevens, I have had but a single thought since the day of my dishonor—but a single prayer—and that was for the moment and the opportunity when I might wash my hands in your blood. Your looks, your words, revive the feeling within me. Even now I feel the thirst to slay you arising in my soul. I do not speak to threaten. To speak, at all, I must speak this language. I obey the feeling whatever it may be. Let me then implore you, be warned while there is time. Another day, and I may not be able to command myself—I can scarcely do so now; and in doing so, the effort is not made in your behalf—not even in my own. It is for him—for Beauchampe only. He comes—be warned—beware!"

The approach of the light and the sounds of voices from

without, produced their natural effect. They warned the offender much more effectually than even the exhortation of the woman, stern, vehement, as it was. Nay, he did not believe in the sincerity of her speech. His vanity forbade that. He could not easily persuade himself of the revolution which she alleged her mind to have undergone, in his case, from love to hate; and was not the man to attach any very great degree of faith to asseverations of such hostility at any time on the part of a creature usually so unstable and capricious as he deemed woman to be. It is certain that what she said had failed to affect him as it was meant to have done. The unhappy woman saw that with an increased feeling of care and apprehension. She beheld it in the leer of confident assurance which he still continued to bestow upon her even when the feet of Beauchampe were upon the threshold; and felt it in the half-whispered words of hope and entreaty with which the criminal closed the conference between them at the same moment.

Truly bitter was that cup to her at this moment—fearful and bitter! Involuntarily she clasped her hands, with the action of entreaty, while her eyes once more riveted themselves upon him. A meaning smile, which reawakened all her indignation, answered her, and then the muscles of both were required to be composed and inexpressive, as the husband once more stood between them.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE BLIND SEEKER AFTER FATE.

THE necessity of the case brought a tolerable composure to the countenances of both the parties as Beauchampe and his companion re-entered the room. An instant after, the wife left it and hurried up to her chamber. Beauchampe's eye followed her movements curiously. In truth, knowing the dread and aversion which she had avowed, at mingling again in society, he was anxious to ascertain how she had borne herself in the interview with his friend.

"Truly, Beauchampe," said the latter, as if in answer to his thoughts, "your wife is a very splendid woman."

"Ah! do you like her? Did she converse freely with you? She speaks well, but does not like society much."

"Very—she has a fine majestic mind. Talks admirably well. Did you meet with her *here?*"

"Yes," said the other, though with some hesitation. "This farm upon which we live is her mother's."

"Her mother! ah! what was her maiden-name, Beauchampe? I think you mentioned it in your letter, but it escapes me now?"

"Cooke: Miss Anna Cooke."

"Cooke, Cooke—I wonder if she is of the Cookes of Sunbury? I used to know that family."

"I think—I believe not—I am not sure, however. I really can not say."

The reply of Beauchampe was made with some trepida-

tion. The inquiry of Sharpe, which had been urged very gravely, aroused the only half-latent consciousness of the husband, who began to feel the awkwardness of answering any more particular questions. Sharpe did not perceive the anxiety of Beauchampe—he was himself too much absorbed in the subject of which he spoke.

"Your wife is certainly a very splendid woman in person, Beauchampe; and her mind appears to be original and well informed. But she seems melancholy, Beauchampe; quite too much so, for a newly-made bride. Eh! what can be the matter?"

"She has had losses—misfortunes—her mother, too, is an invalid, and she has been compelled to be a watcher for some time past."

"And how long have they been neighbors to your mother? If I recollect, you never spoke of them before?"

"You forget, I have been absent from home some years," replied Beauchampe evasively.

"True; I suppose they have come into the neighborhood within that time? You did not know your wife in boyhood, did you?"

"No—I did not. I never saw her till my present visit."

"I thought not! Such a woman is not to be passed over with indifference. Her person must attract—and her intellect must secure and fascinate. I should say no man was ever more fortunate in his choice. What say you, Barnabas? We must give Beauchampe a certificate?"

"I suppose so, if you say so; but I can only judge of Mrs. Beauchampe by appearances. I have had none of the chat. I agree with you that she is a splendid woman to the eye, and will take your judgment for the rest."

"You will be safe in doing so. But how do you find your horse?"

"Regularly lame. I'm afraid the cursed brute's snagged or has a nail in his foot. The quick's touched somehow, for he won't lay the foot to the ground."

"That's bad! What have you done?"

"Nothing! We can see to do nothing to-night; but by the peep of day I must be at him. I must have your help, Beauchampe—with your soap and turpentine, and whatever else may be good for such a case?"

Beauchampe answered with readiness, perhaps rather pleased than otherwise that the subject should be changed.

"With your permission, then, I will leave you," said Barnabas, "and get my sleep while I may. Let your boy waken me at dawn, if you please, for I am really anxious about the animal. He is a favorite—a nag among a thousand."

"As every man's nag is," said Sharpe. "You can always tell a born egotist. He has always the best horse and the best gun, the best ox and the best ass, of any man in the country. He really believes it. But ask Barnabas about the best wife, and ten to one he says nothing of his own. He has no boasts, strange to say, about his own rib—bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh."

"You are cutting quite too close," said Barnabas.

"As near to the quick, in your case, as in that of your nag."

"Almost! but the quick in that region is getting callous."

"High time, Barnabas; it has been subject to sufficient induration."

"At all events, I have no dread of your knife; its edge is quite too blunt to do much hurt. Good-night: try it on Beauchampe. A young man and a young wife—I have very little doubt you can find the quick in him with a little probing."

The quick in Beauchampe's case had already been found. Good Mr. Barnabas little knew on what delicate ground he was trespassing.

"A good fellow, that Barnabas," said Sharpe, "but a dull one. He really fancies, now, that his nag is a creature of great blood and bottom; and a more sorry jade

never paddled to a country muster-ground. He will scarcely sleep to-night, with meditating upon the embrocations, the fomentations, the fumigations, and whatever else may be necessary. But a truce to this, Beauchampe. I have a better subject. Seriously, my dear boy, I have never been more pleasantly surprised than in meeting with your wife. Really, she is remarkably beautiful; and, though she is evidently shy of strangers, yet, as you know I have the art of bringing women out, I may boast of my ability to say what stuff she is made of. She speaks with singular force and elegance. I have never met with equal eloquence in any woman but one."

"And who is she?"

"Nay, I can not tell you *that*. It is years since I knew her, and she is no longer the same being: but your wife very much reminds me of her."

"Was she as beautiful as Anna?"

"Very near. She was something younger than your wife—a slight difference—a few years only; but the advantage, if this were any, is compensated by the superior dignity and the lofty character of yours. She I allude to —but it matters not now. Enough that your wife brings her to my mind as vividly as if the real, living presence were before me, whom I once knew and admired, years ago."

Thus, with a singular audacity, did Colonel Sharpe dally with this dangerous subject. He did not this perversely—with wilful premeditation. It seemed as if he could not well avoid it. Evil thoughts have in them that faculty of perversely impelling the mind and tongue which is possessed by intoxicating liquors. At moments, the wily assassin strove to avoid the subject, but he returned to it again almost the instant after, even as one who recoils suddenly from the edge of some unexpected precipice, again and again advances once more to gaze, with fascinated vision, down into its dim and perilous depths.

A like fascination did this subject possess over the mind of Beauchampe. The feeling of confidence, amounting to defiance, which he expressed to his wife, before their guests had arrived, and whenever the two had spoken of going into the world, no longer seemed to sustain him. The moment that a stranger's lip spoke her name, and those inquiries were made, which are natural enough in such cases from the lips of friends, about the connections and history of the woman he had married, then did Beauchampe, for the first time, perceive the painful meshes of deception into which the unfortunate events in his wife's life would necessarily involve his utterance. Yet still, with the restlessness of discontent, did he himself incline his ear to the smallest reference which his companion made to this subject. His pride was excited to hear her praises, and the rather barefaced and bald compliments which had been paid to her intellect and beauty were dear to him as the lover and the worshipper of both. If love be timid, of itself, in the utterance of eulogium upon the beauties which it admires, it is equally certain that no subject, from the lips of another, can be more really grateful to its ear. It was perhaps this sort of pleasure which Beauchampe derived from the subject, and which made him incline to it whenever his companion employed it.

Still, in the language of Mr. Barnabas, there was an occasional touching of the *quick* in what Sharpe said, at moments, under which his sensibilities winced. It was, therefore, with a mixed or rather divided feeling, neither of pain nor pleasure, or a compounded one of both, that Beauchampe conducted his friend to the chamber which was assigned him—returning afterward to his own, in a state of mind highly excited, almost feverish—dissatisfied with himself, his friend—with every person *but* his wife. With her he had no cause of quarrel. No doubt of her, no sense of jealousy, no regret, no apprehension, disturbed that devoted passion which made him resolve, under all circumstances.

to link her with his life. If anything, the effect of the evening's interview was to make him look with eyes of greater favor upon her taste for privacy, and the life of seclusion in which, up to this period, his moments of superior happiness had been known. But this subject does not concern us now.

Colonel Sharpe was shown into the same chamber which had been allotted to Mr. Barnabas. In our frontier country, it need scarcely be stated, that the selfishness which insists upon chamber and bed to itself is apt to be practically rebuked in a manner the most decided. In some parts, two in a bed would be thought quite a liberal arrangement; and may well be thought so, when it is known that four or five is not an uncommon number—the fifth man being occasionally placed crosswise, in the manner of a raft-tie, rather, it would seem, to keep the rest from falling out, than with the view to making him unnecessarily comfortable.

Messrs. Sharpe and Barnabas were too well accustomed to the condition of country-life to make any scruple about that arrangement which placed them in the same apartment and couch; and, under existing circumstances, the former was rather pleased with it than otherwise. He had scarcely entered the room before he carefully fastened the door; listened for the retreating steps of Beauchampe, till they were finally lost; and, while Barnabas was wondering at, and vainly endeavoring to divine the reason of this mystery, he approached the bed where the other lay, and seated himself upon it.

"You are not asleep, Barnabas?" he said in a whisper.

"No," replied the other, with tones made rather husky by a sudden tremulousness of the nerves. "No! what's the matter?"

"Matter enough—the strangest matter in the world! Would you believe it, that Margaret Cooper—the girl whose seduction was charged upon me by Calvert—and Beauchampe's wife are one and the same person!"

"The devil they are!" exclaimed the other, in his surprise rising to a sitting posture in the bed.

"True as gospel!"

"Can't be possible, Sharpe!"

"Possible, and true. They are the same. I have spoken with her as Margaret Cooper; the recognition is complete on both sides. We talked of nothing else while you and Beauchampe were at the stables."

"Great God! how awkward! What's to be done?"

"Awkward? where's the awkwardness? I see nothing awkward about it. On the contrary, I regard this meeting as devilish fortunate. I was never half satisfied to lose her as I did, and to find her again is like finding one's treasure when he had given up the hope of it for ever."

"But what do you mean, Sharpe? Are you really insensible to the danger?"

"What danger?"

"Why, that she'll blow you to her husband!"

"What wife would do that, d'ye think? No, no, Barnabas; she's no such fool! Of course, she kept her secret when she married him. She'll scarcely blab it now."

"But won't this affair of Calvert get to his ears?"

"What if it does? It can do no mischief. Had you listened to my examination of Beauchampe—but you're a dull fellow, Barnabas! Didn't you hear me ask what his wife's maiden name was?—maiden name, indeed!—Did you hear the answer?"

"Yes—he said the name was Cooke."

"To be sure he did—Ann, or Anna Cooke—his Anna! Ha! ha! ha! *His* Anna!"

"But don't laugh so loud, Sharpe; they'll hear you and suspect."

"Pshaw, you're timid as a hare in December. Don't you see that she has imposed upon him a false name. Let him hear till doomsday of Margaret Cooper and myself, and it brings him not a jot nigher to the truth. But, of course,

you must tell him of my affair with Calvert, and give the political version. He can scarce hear any other version from any other source: political hacks will scarcely ever deal in truth when a lie may be had as easily, and can serve their turn as well. We are representatives of our several parties and principles, you know; treating each other roughly—too roughly—without gloves, and, as usual in such cases, exchanging shots by way of concluding an ill-adjusted argument. There's no danger of anything, but what we please, meeting Beauchampe's ears about this affair with Calvert."

"But, by Jove, Sharpe, this is a d——d ticklish situation to be in. I'd rather you were not here in his house. I'd rather be elsewhere myself."

"You are certainly the most timid mortal. Will you set off to-morrow with your lame horse?"

"If he can hobble at all, I will, by Jove! I don't like the situation we're in at all."

"And by Venus, friend Barnabas, if such be your determination, you set off alone. I'm not going to give up my treasure the moment I find it, for any Beauchampe or Barnabas of you all. No—no! my most excellent, but most apprehensive friend—having seen her, how can you think it? But you have neither eyes nor passion. By Heavens, Barnabas, I am all in a convulsion of joy! I see her before me now—those dilating eyes, wild, bright, almost fierce in their brightness, like those of an eagle; those lips, that brow, and that full and heaving bosom, whose sweets—"

"Hush! you are mad; if you must feel these raptures, Sharpe, for God's sake say nothing about them. They will hear you in the adjoining room."

"No—no! it is your silly fears, Barnabas. I am speaking in a whisper."

"D—n such whispers, say I. They can be heard by keen ears half a mile. But you say you spoke with her—what did she say? Did she abuse you?"

"No! indeed!"

"Is it possible—the b—"

"Hush! hush! You do not understand her. She did not abuse me, for of Billingsgate she knows nothing. You must not think of her as of your ordinary town wenches. She is too proud for any such proceeding. She threatened me."

"Ah! How?"

"With her own vengeance and that of her husband. Told me she had the weapon for me ready sharpened, and the pistol shotted, and had kept them ready for years."

"The Tartar! and what did you say?"

"Laughed, of course; and, but for the coming of the lantern and the husband, I should have silenced her threats by stopping her mouth with kisses."

"You're a dare-devil, Sharpe, and you'll have your throat cut some day by some husband or other."

"Your whiskers will be gray enough before that time comes. You know husbands quite as little as you know wives. Now, as soon as Margaret Cooper began to threaten me, I knew I was safe."

"Devilish strange sort of security that."

"True and certain, nevertheless. People who threaten much seldom perform. But I have even better security than this."

"What's that?"

"She loves me."

"What! you think so still, do you? You're a conceited fellow."

"I know it! That first passion, Barnabas, is the longest lived. You can not expel it. It holds on, it lasts longer than youth. It is the chief memory of youth. It recalls youth, revives it, and revives all the joys which came with youth—the bloom, the freshness and the fragrance. Do you think that Margaret Cooper can forget that it was my lips that first gave birth to the passion of love within her

bosom—that first awakened its glow, and taught her—what before she never knew—that there were joys still left to earth, which could yet restore all the fabled bliss of Eden? Not easily, *mon ami!* No, Barnabas—the man who has once taught a woman how to love, may be, if he pleases, the perpetual master of her fate. She can not help but love him—she must obey—and none but a fool or a madman can forfeit the allegiance which her heart will always be ready to pay to his."

"I don't know, Sharpe—you always talk these things well; but I can't help thinking that there's danger. There's something in this woman's looks very different from the ordinary run of women."

"She *is* different, so far as superiority makes her different, but the same nature is hers which belongs to all. Love is the fate that makes or unmakes the whole world of woman."

"Maybe so; but this woman seems as proud, and cold, and stately—"

"Masks, my boy—glorious masks, that help to conceal as much fire and passion, and tumultuous love, as ever flamed in any woman's breast."

"She awes me with her looks, and if she threatened you, Sharpe, she seems to me the very woman to keep her threats."

"If she had *not* threatened me, Barnabas, I should have probably set out to-night."

"It will be a wise step to do so in the morning."

"No—no! my dear fellow. Neither you nor I go in the morning. Fortune favors me! She has thrown in my way the only treasure which I did not willingly throw aside myself, and which I have so long sighed, but in vain, to recover. Shall I now refuse to pick it up and enshrine it in my breast once more? No—no! Barnabas! I am no stoic—I am no such profligate insensible!"

"Why, you don't mean—"

The inquiry was conveyed, and the sentence finished by a look.

"Do I not! Call me slave, ass, dotard—anything that can express contempt—if I do not. And hark ye, Barnabas, you must help me."

"I help you? I'll be d——d if I do! What! to have this fellow, Beauchampe, slit my carotid? Never! never!"

"Pshaw, you are getting cowardly in your old age."

"I tell you this fellow, Beauchampe, is a sort of Mohawk when he's roused."

"And I tell you, Barnabas, there's no sort of danger—none at least to you. All that you will have to do will be to get him out of the way. You wish to ride round the country—I do not. You wish to try the birds—nay, he can even get up an elk-hunt for you. He knows that I have no passion for these things, and it will seem natural enough that I should remain at home. Do you take? At the worst, I am the offender—and the danger will be mine only. But there will be *no* danger. I tell you that Margaret Cooper has only changed in name. In all other respects she is the same. There can be no danger if Beauchampe chooses to remain blind, and if you will assist me in keeping him so."

"I don't half like it, Sharpe."

"Pshaw! my good fellow, there's no good reason why you should like or dislike. The simple question is, whether, in a matter which will not affect you one way or the other, you are willing to serve your friend. That is the true and only question. You see for yourself that there can be no danger to you. I am sure there's no danger to anybody. At all events, be the danger what it may, and take you what steps you please, I am resolved on mine. Reconcile to yourself, as you may, the desertion of your friend, in consequence of a timidity which has no cause whatever of alarm."

Sharpe rose at this moment, kicked off his boots, and

prepared to undress. The effect of a strong will upon a feeble one was soon obvious. Barnabas hesitated still, hemmed and ha'd, dilated once more upon the danger, and finally subsided into a mood of the most perfect compliance with all the requisitions of his friend. They carried the discussion still farther into the night, but that is no reason why we should trespass longer upon the sleeping hours of our readers.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SERPENT AT HIS OLD SUBTLETIES.

It was no difficult matter, in carrying out the design of Sharpe, to send Barnabas abroad the next morning in charge of Beauchampe. Sharpe had a convenient headache, and declined the excursion; proposing, very deliberately, to the hushand, to console himself for his absence in the company of the wife.

The latter was not present when the arrangement was made. It took place at the stables, after breakfast, while they were engaged in the examination of the injured horse of Mr. Barnabas; and this gentleman, with his *cicerone*, set forth from the spot, leaving Sharpe, at his own leisure, to return to the house.

Having seen them fairly off, he did so with the deliberation of one having a settled purpose. For his reappearance, alone, Mrs. Beauchampe was entirely unprepared. As he entered the room where she was sitting, she rose to leave it, though without any symptoms of haste or agitation. He placed himself between her and the door, and thus effectually prevented her egress.

She fixed her eye keenly and coldly upon him.

"Alfred Stevens," she said, "you are trifling with your fate."

"Call it not trifling, dear Margaret. *You* are my fate, and I never was more earnest in my life. Do not show

yourself so inflexible. After so long a separation, such coldness is cruel—it is unnatural."

"You say truly," she replied; "I *am* your fate. I have long felt the persuasion that I would be; and I had prepared myself for it. Still, I would it were not so. I would not have your blood either on mine or the hands of Beauchampe. I implored you last night to spare me this necessity. It is not yet too late. Trifle not with your destiny—waste not the moments which are left you. Persevere in this course of madness for a day longer, and you are doomed! Hear me—believe me! I speak mildly and with method. I am speaking to you the convictions of five dreary years."

The calm, even, almost gentle manner and subdued accents of the woman, had the effect of encouragement rather than of warning to the vain and self-deceiving *roué*. He was deceived by her bearing. He was not so profound a proficient as he fancied himself in the secrets of a woman's heart; and, firmly persuaded of the notion that he had expressed to Barnabas, in the conversation of the previous night, that women are never so little dangerous as when they threaten, he construed all that she said into a sort of *ruse de guerre*, the more certainly to conceal her real weakness.

"Come, come, Margaret," he said, "it is you that trifle, not me. This is no time for crimination and complaint. Let me atone to you for the past. Believe me, you wrong me if you suppose I meant to desert you. I was the victim of circumstances as well as yourself—circumstances which I can easily explain to you, and which will certainly excuse me for any seeming breach of faith. If you ever loved me, dear Margaret, it will not be difficult to believe what I am prepared to affirm."

"I do not doubt, sir, that you are prepared to affirm anything. But I ask you neither for proofs nor oaths. Why should you volunteer them unasked, undesired? I

have no wish to make you add a second perjury to the first."

"It is no perjury, Margaret; and you *must* hear me. I claim it for my own justification."

"I *will not* hear you, sir! If you are so well assured of your justification, let that consciousness content you. I do not accuse—I will not reproach you. Go your ways—leave me to mine. Surely, surely, Alfred Stevens, it is the least boon that I could solicit at your hands, that, having trampled me to the dust in shame—having robbed me of peace and pride for ever—you should now leave me, without further persecution, to the homely privacy which the rest of my life requires."

"Do not call it persecution, Margaret. It is love—love only! You were my first love—you shall be my last. I can not be deceived, dear Margaret, when I assume that I was yours. We were destined for each other; and when I recall to your memory those happy hours—"

"Recall them at your peril, Alfred Stevens!" she exclaimed vehemently, interrupting him in the speech; "recall them at your peril! Too vividly black already are those moments in my memory. Spare me—spare yourself! Beware! be warned in season! O man! man! blind and desperate, you know not how nearly you stand on the brink of the precipice!"

He regarded her with eyes full of affected admiration.

"At least, Margaret, whatever may be the falling off in your love, your genius seems to be as fresh and vigorous as ever. There is the same high poetical enthusiasm in your words and thoughts, the same burning eloquence—"

"Colonel Sharpe, these things deceive me no longer. I regard them now as the disparaging mockeries of a subtle and base spirit, meant to beguile and abuse the confidence of a frank and unsuspecting one. I am no longer unsuspecting. I am no longer the blind, vain country-girl, whom with ungenerous cunning you could deceive and dishonor

Shame and grief, which you brought to my dwelling, have taught me lessons of truth and humiliation, if not wisdom. What you say to me now, in the way of praise, does not exhilarate—can not deceive me—and may exasperate! Once more I say to you, beware!"

"Ah, Margaret! are you sure that you do not deceive yourself also in what you say? Allow that you care nothing for praise—allow that your ear has become insensible to the language of admiration—surely it can not be insensible to that of love."

"Love!—*your* love!"

"Yes, Margaret—*my* love. You were not insensible to it once."

"I implore you not to remind me!"

"Ah, but I must, Margaret. Those moments were too precious to me to be forgotten; the memory of those joys too dear. Bitter was the grief which I felt when compelled to fly from a region in which I had taught, and been learned myself, the first true mysteries which I had ever known of love. Think you that I could forget those mysteries—those joys? Oh, never! nor could you! On that conviction my hope is built. Wherever I fled, that memory was with me still. It was my present solace under every difficulty—the sweetening drop in every cup which my lips were compelled to drink of bitter and annoyance. Margaret, I can not think that you did not love me; I can not think that you do not love me still. It is impossible that you should have forgotten what we both once knew of rapture in those dear moments at Charlemont. And having loved me then—having given to me the first youthful emotions of your bosom—you surely can not love this Beauchampe. No, no! love can not be so suddenly extinguished. The altar may have been deserted; the fire, untended, it may have grown dim; but it is the sacred fire that can never utterly go out. I can understand, dearest Margaret, that it is proper, that, having formed these new

ties, you should maintain appearances; but these appearances need not be fatal to Love, though they may require prudence at his hands. Have no fear that my passion will offend against prudence. No, dearest Margaret, the kiss will be the sweeter now, as it was among the groves of Charlemont, from being stolen in secret."

She receded a few steps while he was yet speaking, and at the close sunk into a chair. He approached her. She waved him off in a manner that could not be set at naught. A burning flush was upon her face, and the compression of her lips denoted the strong working of a settled but stifled resolution. She spoke at length:—

"I have heard you to the close, Alfred Stevens. I understand you. You speak with sufficient boldness now. Would to God you had only declared yourself thus boldly in the groves of Charlemont! Could I have seen then, as I do now, the tongue of the serpent, and the cloven foot of the fiend, I had not been what I am now, nor would you have dared to speak these accursed words in my ears!"

"Margaret—"

"Stay, sir! I have heard you patiently. The shame which follows guilt required thus much of me. You shall now hear *me!*"

"Will I not, Margaret? Ah! though your words continue thus bitter, still it is a pleasure to hearken to *your* words."

A keen, quick flash of indignation brightened in her eyes.

"I suppress," she said, "I suppress much more than I speak. I will confine my speech to that which seems only necessary. Once more, then, Colonel Sharpe, I understand your meaning. I do not disguise from you the fact that nothing more is necessary to a full comprehension of the foul purposes which fill your breast. But my reply is ready. I can not second them. I hate you with the most bitter loathing. I behold you with scorn and detestation—as a

creature equally malignant and contemptible—as a villain beyond measure—as a coward below contempt—as a traitor to every noble sentiment of humanity—having the malice of the fiend without his nobleness, and with every characteristic of the snake but his shape! Judge, then, for yourself, with what prospect you pursue your purpose with me, when such are the feelings I bear you—when such are the opinions which I hold you in."

"I can not believe you, Margaret!" and his mortified vanity showed itself in his angry visage. The truth was equally strange and terrible to his ears.

"God be witness that I speak the truth!"

"Margaret, it is you that trifle with your fate. If, in truth, you despise my love, you can not surely despise my power. It is now my turn to give you warning. I do not threaten, but—beware!"

She started to her feet, and confronted him with eyes that flashed the defiance of a spirit above all apprehension.

"Your power! your power! you give me warning—you threaten! Do I rightly hear you? Speak out! I would not now misunderstand you! No, no! never again must I misunderstand you! What is it you threaten?"

"You do misunderstand me, Margaret: I do not threaten. I seek to counsel only—to warn you that I have power; and that there can be no good policy in making me your enemy."

"You *are* mine enemy: you have ever been my *worst* enemy! Heaven forbid that I should again commit the monstrous error of thinking you my friend!"

"I *am* your friend, and would be. Nay, more, in spite of this scorn which you express for me, and which I can not believe, I love you, Margaret, better, far better, than I have ever loved woman."

"You have a wife, Colonel Sharpe?"

"Yes—but—"

"And children?"

"Yes—"

"For their sakes—I do not plead for myself, nor for you—for *their* sakes, once more I implore you to forbear this pursuit. Persecute me no longer. Do not deceive yourself with the vain belief that I have any feeling for you but that which I now express. I hate and loathe you—nay, am sworn, and again swear, to destroy you, unless you desist—unless you leave me, and leave me for ever!"

Her subdued tones again deceived him. He caught her hand, as she waved it in the utterance of the last sentence. He carried it to his lips; but, hastily withdrawing it from his grasp, she smote him upon the mouth in the next instant, and, as he darted toward her, threw open the drawer of a table which stood within arm's length of her position, and pulling from it a pistol, confronted him with its muzzle. He recoiled, more perhaps with surprise than alarm. She cocked the weapon, thrust it toward him with all the manner of one determined upon its use, and with the ease and air of one to whom the use of the weapon is familiar.

There was a pause of a single instant, in which it was doubtful whether she would draw the trigger or not—doubtful even to Sharpe himself. But, with that pause, a more human feeling came to her bosom. Her arm sunk—the weapon was suffered to fall by her side, and she said, with faltering voice:—

"Go! I spare you for the sake of the unhappy woman, your wife. Go, sir: it is well for you that I remembered her."

"Margaret! this from you?"

"And from whom with more propriety? Know, Alfred Stevens, that this weapon was prepared for you last night; nay, more, that mine is no inexpert hand in its use. For five years, day by day, have I practised this very weapon at a mark, thinking of you only as the object upon whom it was necessary I should use it. Think you, then, what you escape, and return thanks to Heaven that brought to my

thought, in the very moment when your life hung upon the smallest movement of my finger, the recollection of your wife and innocent children! Judge for yourself who has most to fear, you or myself."

"Still, Margaret, there is a cause of fear which you do not seem to see."

"What is that?"

"Not the loss of life, perhaps. *That*, I can readily imagine, is not likely to be a cause of much fear with a proud, strong-minded woman like yourself. But there are subjects of apprehension infinitely greater than this, particularly to a woman, a wife, and to you more than all—your husband!"

"What of my husband?"

"A single word from me to him, and where is your peace, your security? Ha! am I now understood? Do you not see, Margaret, do you not feel, that I have power, with a word, more effectually to destroy than even pistol-bullet could do it?"

"And this is your precious thought!" she said, with a look of bitter, smiling contempt; "and, with the baseness which so completely makes your nature, you would lay bare to my husband the unhappy guilt in which, through your own foul arts, my girlish innocence was lost! What a brave treachery would this be!"

"Nay, Margaret, but I do not threaten this. I only declare what might be the effect of your provoking me beyond patience."

"Oh! you are moderate—very moderate. I look on you, Alfred Stevens, from head to foot, and doubt my eyes that tell me I behold a man. The shape is there—the outside of that noble animal, but it is sure a fraud. The beast-fiend has usurped the nobler carcass, himself being all the while unchanged."

"Margaret, this scorn—"

"Is due, not less to your folly than your baseness, as you

will see when I have told you all. Know then, that when I gave this hand to Orville Beauchampe—nay, before it was given to him, and while he was yet at liberty to renounce it—I told him that it was a dishonored hand."

"You did not! You could not!"

"By the God that hears me, I did. I told him the whole story of my folly and my shame. Oh! Alfred Stevens, if in truth you had loved me as you professed, you would have known that it was not in my nature to stoop to fraud and concealment at such a time. Could you think that I would avail myself of the generous ardor of that noble youth to suffer him, unwittingly, to link himself to possible shame? No—no! His magnanimity, his love, the warmth of his affections, the loftiness of his soul, his genius—all—all demanded of me the most perfect confidence; and I gave it him. I withheld nothing, except, it seems, the true name of my deceiver!"

"I can not, believe it, Margaret—Beauchampe never would have married you with this knowledge."

"On my life, he did. Every syllable was spoken in his ears. Nay, more, Colonel Sharpe—and let this be another warning to you to forbear and fly—I swore Beauchampe on the Holy Evangelists, ere he made my hand his own, to avenge my dishonor on my betrayer. I made *that* the condition of my hand!"

"And why now would you forbear prosecuting this vengeance? Why, if you were so resolved upon it—why do you counsel me to fly from the danger? Do you mean to declare the truth to Beauchampe when I am gone?"

"No! not if you leave me, and promise me never again to seek either me or him."

"No—no! Margaret, this story lacks probability. I can not believe it. I am a lawyer, you must remember. These inconsistencies are too strong. You swear your husband on the Holy Evangelists to take my life, and the next moment shield me from the danger! Now, the ferocious hate

which induced the first proceeding can not be so easily quieted, as in a little month after, to effect the second. The whole story is defective, Margaret—it lacks all probability."

"Be it so. You are a lawyer, and no doubt a wise one. The story may seem improbable to you, but it is true nevertheless. However strange and inconsistent, it is yet not unnatural. The human ties which bind me to earth have grown stronger since my marriage, and, for this reason, if for no other, I would have the hands of my husband free from the stain of human blood, even though that blood be yours! For this reason I have condescended to expostulate with you—to implore you! For this reason do I still implore and expostulate. Leave me—leave this house the moment your friend returns. Avoid Beauchampe as well as myself. There are a thousand easy modes for breaking off an intimacy. Adopt any one of these which shall seem least offensive. Spare me the necessity of declaring to my husband that the victim he is sworn to slay, is the person who has pretended to be his friend."

The philosophical poet tells us, that he whom God seeks to destroy he first renders a lunatic. In the conceit of his soul, in the plenitude of his legal subtlety, and with that blinding assurance that he could not lose, by any process, the affections he had once won, Sharpe persisted in believing that the story to which he listened, was in truth, nothing more than an expedient of the woman to rid herself of the presence and the attentions which she rather feared than disliked. He neither believed that she had told the truth to Beauchampe, nor that she loathed him as she had declared. Himself of a narrow and slavish mind, he could not conceive the magnanimity of soul, which, in such a case as that of Margaret Cooper, would declare her dishonor to a lover seeking her hand—still less was he willing to believe in the further stretch of magnanimity, on the part of Beauchampe, in marrying any woman in the teeth of such

a revelation. We may add, that, with such a prodigious degree of self-esteem as he himself possessed, the improbability was equally great that Margaret should ever cease to regard him with the devotedness of love. He had taken for granted that it was through the medium of her affections that she became his victim, though all his arts were made to bear upon other characteristics of her moral nature, entirely different from those which belong to the tender passion. A vain man finds it easy to deceive himself, if he deceives nobody else. Here, then, was a string of improbabilities which it required the large faith of a liberal spirit to overcome. Sharpe was not a man of liberal spirit, and such men are usually incredulous where the magnanimity of noble souls is the topic. Small wits are always of this character. Skepticism is their shield and even sevenfold coat-of-mail, and incredulity is the safe wisdom of timidity and self-esteem. Such men neither believe in their neighbors or in the novel truths which they happen to teach. They pay the penalty in most cases by dying in their blindness.

Will this be the case with the party before us? Time will show. At all events, the earnest adjurations of the passionate and full-souled woman were entirely thrown away upon him. What she had said had startled him at first; but with the usual obduracy of self-esteem, he had soon recovered from his momentary discomposure. He shook his head slowly, while a smile on his lips declared his doubts.

"No, Margaret, it is impossible that you should have told these things to Beauchampe. I know you better, and I know well that he could never have married you, having a knowledge of the truth. You can not deceive me, Margaret, and wherefore should you try? Why would you reject the love which was so dear to you in Charlemont; and if *you* can do this, *I* can not? I love you too well, Margaret — remember too keenly the delights of our first union,

and *will not* believe in the necessity that denies that we should meet. No—no! Once found, I will not lose you again, Margaret. You are too precious in my sight. We must see and meet each other often. Beauchampe shall still be my friend—his marriage with you has made him doubly dear to me. So far from cutting him, I shall find occasions for making his household a place of my constant pilgrimage; and do not sacrifice yourself by vain opposition to this intimacy. It will do no good and may do harm. I can make his fortune; and I will, if you will hear reason. But you must remove to Frankfort—be a dutiful wife in doing so; and—for this passion of revenge—believe that I was quite as much afflicted as yourself by the necessity that tore us asunder—as was the truth—and you will forgive the involuntary crime, and forget everything but the dear delights of that happy period. Do you hear me, Margaret—you do not seem to listen!"

She regarded him with a countenance of melancholy scorn, which seemed also equally expressive of hopelessness and pity. It seemed as if she was at a loss which sentiment most decidedly to entertain. Looking thus, but in perfect silence, she rose, and taking the pistol from the table where it had lain, she advanced toward the door of the apartment. He would have followed her, but she paused when at the door, and turning, said to him:—

"If I knew, Colonel Sharpe, by what form of oath I could make you believe what I have said, I would asseverate solemnly its truth. I am anxious for your sake, for my sake, and the sake of my husband, that you should believe me. As God will judge us all, I have spoken nothing but the truth. I would save you, and spare myself the necessity of any further revelations. Life is still dear to me—peace is everything to me now. It is to secure this peace that I suppress my feelings—that I still implore you to listen to me and to believe. Be merciful. Spare me! Spare yourself. Propose any form of oath which you con

sider most solemn, most binding, and I will repeat it on my knees, in confirmation of what I have said! for on my soul I have spoken nothing but the truth!"

He laughed and shook his head, as he advanced to where she stood.

"Nay, nay, Margaret—the value of oaths in such cases is but small. No form of oath can be very binding. Jove, you know, laughs at the perjuries of lovers; and if we are lovers no longer—which I can not easily believe—the business between us, is so certainly a lover's business, that Jove will laugh none the less at the vows we violate in carrying it on. You take it too seriously, Margaret—it is you that are not wise. You can not deceive me—you are wasting labor."

She turned from him mournfully, with a single look, and in another moment was gone from sight.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DOOMED.

Mr. Barnabas and Beauchampe returned from their morning ride in excellent spirits; but there was some anxiety and inquiry in the look of the former as his eye sought that of his confederate. He gathered little from this scrutiny, however, unless it were the perfect success of the latter in the prosecution of his criminal object. The face and manner of Colonel Sharpe wore all the composure and placid satisfaction of one equally at peace with all the world and his own conscience. His headache had subsided. He seemed to have nothing on his mind to desire or to regret.

"Lucky dog!" was the mental exclamation of his satellite. "He never fails in anything he undertakes. He does as he pleases equally with men and women."

Beauchampe had his anxieties also, which were a little increased as he noted a greater degree of sadness on his wife's countenance than usual. But his anxiety had no relation whatever to the real cause of fear—to the real source of that suffering which appeared in her looks. Not the slightest suspicion of evil from his friend Colonel Sharpe had ever crossed his mind, even for an instant.

Dinner came off, and Colonel Sharpe was in his happiest vein. His jests were of the most brilliant order; but, unless in the case of Mr. Barnabas, his humor was not conta-

gious. Mrs. Beauchampe scarcely seemed to hear what was addressed to her; and Beauchampe, beholding the increasing depth of shade on his wife's countenance, necessarily felt a corresponding anxiety, which imparted similar shadows to his own.

At dinner, Mr. Barnabas said something across the table to his companion, in reference to the probable time of departure.

"What say you—shall we ride to-morrow?"

"Why, how's your nag?"

"Better; not absolutely well, but able to go, when going homeward."

"*You* may go," said Sharpe, abruptly; "but I shall make a week of it with Beauchampe. The country, you say, is worth seeing, and there may be votes to be won by showing one's self. I see no reason even for you to hurry; and I dare say Beauchampe's hospitality will scarcely complain of our trespass for two days longer."

The speaker looked to Beauchampe, who, as a matter of course, professed his satisfaction at the prospect of keeping his friends. The eye of Sharpe glanced to the face of the lady. A dark-red spot was upon her forehead. She met the glance of her enemy, and requited it with one of deep significance; then, rising from the table, at once left the apartment.

The things were removed, and Mr. Barnabas, counselled by a glance from his companion, proposed to Beauchampe to explore the farm.

"I can't bear the house when I can leave it—that is, when I'm in the country. A country-house seems to me an intolerable bore. Won't you go, Sharpe?"

But the person addressed had already disposed himself in the rocking-chair, as if for the purpose of taking a nap. He answered, drowsily:—

"No, no, Barnabas; take yourself off! I would enjoy my *siesta* merely. With you, I should be apt to sleep soundly

Take him off, Beauchampe, and suffer me to make myself at home."

"Oh, certainly, if you prefer it."

"I do! I take the world composedly—detest sight-seeing, and believe in Somnus. This habit of mine keeps me out of mischief, into which Barnabas is for ever falling. Away, now, my good boys, and enjoy the world and one another!"

The *roué* was alone. Ten minutes had not passed, when Mrs. Beauchampe re-entered the apartment. This was an event which Colonel Sharpe had scarcely anticipated. He had remained, simply to be in the way of what he would esteem some such fortunate chance; hoped for it; and, believing that the lady was playing only a very natural feminine game, did not think it improbable that the desired opportunity would be afforded him. So early a realization of his wishes was certainly unexpected—not undesired, however. The surprise was a pleasurable one, and he started into instant vivacity on her appearance, rising from his seat and approaching her with extended hand as if to conduct her to it.

"Stay, Colonel Sharpe! I come but for a moment."

"Do not say so, Margaret."

"A moment, sir, will suffice for all that I purpose. You speak of remaining here till the close of the week? Now, hear me! Your horses must be saddled after breakfast to-morrow. You must then depart. I must hear you express this determination when we meet at the breakfast-table. If you do not, sir—on the word of a woman whom you have made miserable, and still keep so, I shall declare to Mr. Beauchampe the whole truth!"

"What! expel me from your house, Margaret? No, no! I as little believe you can do this as do the other. This, my dear girl, is the merest perversity!"

He offered to take her hand. She recoiled.

"Colonel Sharpe, your unhappy vanity deceives you.

What do you see in my looks, my conduct, to justify these doubts of what I say, or this continued presumption on your part? Do I look the wanton? do I look the pliant damsel whose grief is temporary only—which a smile of deceit, or a cunning word, can dissipate in a moment? Look at me well, sir. *My* peace, and *your* life, depend upon the wisdom which Heaven at this moment may vouchsafe you. Oh, sir, be not blind! See, in these wobegone cheeks and eyes, nothing but the misery, approaching to despair, which my bosom feels! See, and be warned! You can not surely doubt that I am in earnest. For the equal sake of your body and soul, I implore you to believe me!"

Cassandra never looked more terribly true to her utterance—to the awful predictions which her lips poured forth—but, like Cassandra, Margaret Cooper was fated not to be believed. The unhappy man, blinded by that flattering self-esteem which blinds so many, was insensible to her expostulations—to the intense wo, expressing itself in looks of the most severe majesty, of her highly-expressive countenance.

The effect of her intensity of feeling was to elevate the style of her beauty, and this was something against the success of her entreaty. Vain and dishonorable as he was, Sharpe gazed on her with a sincere admiration. Unhappily, he was not one to venerate. That refining agent of moral worship was wanting to his heart; and in its place a selfish lust after the pleasures of the moment was the only divinity which he had set up.

It would be idle to repeat his answer to the imploring prayer of the half-distracted woman. He had as little generosity as veneration: he could not forbear. His mind had become inflexible, from the too frequent contemplation of its lusts; and what he said was simply what might have been said by any callous, clever man, who, in the prosecution of a selfish purpose, regards nothing but the end in view. He answered with pleasantry that we which was

so much more expressively shown in her looks than in her utterance. Pleasantry at such a moment! — pleasantry addressed to that painfully-excited imagination, whose now-familiar images were of death, and despair, and blood! She answered him by clasping her hands together.

"We are doomed!" she exclaimed, while a groan forced its way, at the close of her sentence, as if from the very bottom of her heart.

"Doomed, indeed, Margaret! How very idle, unless *you* doom us!"

"And I do! *You* are doomed, and doomed by *me*, Alfred Stevens, unless you leave this house to-morrow!"

"Be sure I shall do no such thing!"

"Your blood be upon your own head! I have warned you, counselled you, implored you — I can do no more!"

"Yes, Margaret, you can persuade me, beguile me, subdue me — make me your captive, slave, worshipper, everything — as you have done before — by only loving me as you did then. Be not foolish and perverse. Come to me: let us renew those happy hours that we knew in Charlemont, when you had none of these gloomy notions to affright others and to vex yourself with!"

"Fool! fool! Blind and vain! With sense neither to see nor to hear! — Alfred Stevens, there is yet time! But the hours are numbered. God be merciful, so that they be not yours! We meet at the table to-morrow morning for the last time."

"Stay, Margaret!" he exclaimed, seeing her about to leave the room.

"To-morrow morning for the last time!" she repeated, as she disappeared from sight.

"Devilish strange! But they are all so — perverse as the devil himself! There is nothing to be done here by assault. We must have time, and make our approaches with more caution. My desertion sticks in her gorge. I must mollify her on that score. Work slowly, but surely

I have been too bold—too confident. I did not make sufficient allowances for her pride, which is diabolically strong. I must ply her with the sedatives first. But one would have thought that she had sufficient experience to have taken the thing more coolly. As for her blabbing to Beauchampe, that's all in my eye! No, no, you can not terrify me by such a threat. I am too old a stager for that: nay, indeed, how much of your wish to drive me off arises from your dread that *I* shall blab! Ha! ha! ha! but you too shall be safe from that. My policy is 'mum,' like your own. To be frightened off by such a threat would prove a man as sorry a fool as coward. We sha'n't go to-morrow, fair Mistress Margaret, doom or no doom!"

Such were the muttered meditations of Colonel Sharpe after Mrs. Beauchampe had left him. Perhaps they were such as would be natural to most men of the same character. His estimate of the woman, also, was no doubt a very just estimate of the ordinary woman of the world, placed in similar circumstances, after having committed the same monstrous and scarcely remediable lapse from virtue and place.

But we have shown that Margaret Cooper was no ordinary woman! He knew *that*, himself; but he did not believe her equal to the purpose which she threatened, nor did he believe her when she informed him of the magnanimous course which she had already pursued in relation to Beauchampe. Could he have believed *that*, indeed?

But it was not meant that he should believe. The destiny that shapes our ends was not to be diverted in his case. As his victim had declared, with solemn emphasis, on leaving him, he was, indeed, doomed—doomed—doomed!

CHAPTER XXVII.

BITTER TEARS OF PREPARATION.

We pass, with hurried progress, over the proceedings of that night. The reader will please believe that Colonel Sharpe was, as usual, happy in his dialogue, and fluent in his humor. Indeed, by that strange contradiction in the work of destiny, which sometimes so arranges it that death does the work of tragedy in the very midst of the marriage merriment, the spirits of the doomed man were never more elastic and excitable than on that very night. He and Barnabas kept his host, till a late hour, from his couch. The sounds of their laughter penetrated the upper apartments, and smote mournfully upon the ears of the unhappy wife, to whom all sounds, at that moment, came laden with the weight of wo. One monotonous voice rang through her senses and the house, as in the case of Macbeth, and cried, "Sleep no more!" Such, at least, was the effect of the cry upon her. Precious little had been her sleep, in that house, from the moment that bad man entered it. Was she ever to sleep again? She herself believed not.

The guests at length retired to their chamber, and Beauchampe sought his. At his approach, his wife rose from her knees. Poor, striving, struggling, hopeless heart! she had been laboring to beat down thought, and to wrestle with prayer. But thought mingled with prayer, and obtained the mastery. Such thoughts, too—such thoughts of the terrible necessity before her!

Oh, how criminal was the selfish denial of that man! Life had become sweet and precious. Her husband had grown dear to her in proportion as he convinced her that she was dear to him. Permitted to remain in their obscurity, life might still be retained, and would continue, with length of days, to become more and more precious. But the destroyer was there, unwilling to spare — unwilling to forego the ravages he had begun. Not to tell her husband the whole truth — to listen to the criminal any longer without denouncing him — would not only be to encourage him in his crime, but to partake of it. If he remained another day, she was bound by duty, and sworn before the altar, to declare the truth; and the truth, once told, was only another name for utter desolation — blood upon the hands, death upon the soul! With such thoughts, prayer was not possible. But she had striven in prayer, and that was something. Nay, it was something gained, even to think in the position of humility — upon her knees.

She rose, when she heard her husband approach — took a book, and seating herself beside the toilet, prepared to read. She composed her countenance, with a very decided effort of will, so as to disperse some of the storm-clouds which had been hanging over it. Her policy was, at present, not to alarm her husband's suspicions, if possible, in relation to her guests. It might be that Sharpe would grow wiser with the passage of the night. Sleep, and quiet, and reflection, might work beneficial results; and if he would only depart with the morning, she trusted to time and to her own influence over Beauchampe, to break off the intimacy between the parties without revealing the fatal truth.

"What! not abed, Anna?" said Beauchampe. "It is late; do you know the hour! It is nigh one!"

"Indeed, but I am not sleepy."

"I am; what with riding and rambling with Barnabas I am completely knocked up. Besides, he is such a dull fel-

low. Now Sharpe has wit, humor, and other resources, which make a man forgetful of the journey and the progress of time."

"Has Colonel Sharpe said anything about going?" demanded the wife with some abruptness.

"Yes—"

"Ah!"—with some eagerness—"when does he go?"

"At the close of the week. He is disposed to see something of the neighborhood."

She drew a long breath, scarcely suppressing the deep sigh which struggled for utterance; and once more fixed her eyes on the book. It need not be said that she read nothing.

"Come to bed, dearest," said Beauchampe tenderly; "you hurt your eyes by night reading. They have been looking red all day."

She promised him, and, overcome with fatigue, the husband soon slept, but the wife did not rise. For more than two hours she sat, the book still in her hands; but her eyes were unconscious of its pages, her thoughts were not in that volume. She thought only of that coming morrow, and the duties and dangers which its coming would involve. She was seeking to steel her mind with the proper resolution, and this was no easy effort.

Imagine the task before her—and the difficulty in the way of acquiring the proper hardihood will easily be understood. Imagine yourself preparing for the doom which is to follow in twelve hours; and conjecture, if you can, the sort of meditations which will come to you in that dreary but short interval of time. Suppose yourself in health, too—young, beautiful, highly endowed, intensely ambitious, with the prospect—if those twelve hours can be passed in safety—of love, long life, happiness, and possibly, "troops of friends" all before you, smiling, beckoning, entreating in the sunny distance! Imagine all this in the case of that proud, noble-hearted, most lovely, highly intellectual, but

wo-environed woman, and you will not wonder that she did not sleep. Still less will it be your wonder that she could not pray. Life and hope were too strong for sufficient humility. The spirit and the energy of her heart were not yet sufficiently subdued.

Dreary was the dismal watch she kept—still in the one position. At length her husband moved and murmured in his sleep. In his sleep he called her name, and coupled with it an endearing epithet. Then the tide flowed. The proper chords of human feeling were stricken in her heart. The rock gushed. It was stubborn no longer. But the waters were bitter, though the relief was sweet. Bitter were the tears she wept, but they *were* tears, human tears; and like the big drops that relieve the heat of the sky and disperse its unbreathing vapors, they took some of the mountain pressure from her heart, and left her free to breathe, and hope, and pray.

She rose and stepped lightly beside the bed where Beauchampe slept. She hung over him. Still he murmured in his sleep. Still he spoke her name, and still his words were those of tenderness and love. Mentally she prayed above him, while the big drops fell from her eyes upon the pillow. One sentence alone became audible in her prayer — that sentence of agonizing apostrophe, spoken by the Savior in his prescience of the dreadful hour of trial which was to come: "If thou be willing, Father, let this cup pass by me!"

She had no other prayer, and in this vain and useless repetition of the undirected thoughts, she passed a sad and comfortless night. But she had been gaining strength. A stern and unfaltering spirit—it matters not whence derived —came to her aid, and with the return of sunrise she arose, with a solemn composure of soul, prepared, however gloomily, to go forward in her terrible duties.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE BOLT SPED.

BEAUCHAMPE rose refreshed and more cheerful than usual. The plans for the day, which had been discussed by himself and friends the previous night, together with the lively dialogue which had made them heedless of the progress of the hours, were recalled to his memory, and he rose with an unwonted spirit of elasticity and humor.

But the lively glance of his eye met no answering pleasure in that of his wife. She was up before him. He did not dream that she had not slept—that for half the night she had hung above his sleep engaged in mental prayer that such slumbers might still be spared to him, even if the dreary doom of such a watch was still allotted to her. He gently reproached her for the settled sadness in her looks, and she replied only by a sigh. He did not notice the intense gleams which, at moments, issued from her eyes, or he might have guessed that some terrible resolution was busy working at the fiery forge within her brain. Could he guess the sort of manufacture going on in that dangerous workshop? But he did not.

The party was assembled at the breakfast-table; and, as if with a particular design to apprize Mrs. Beauchampe, that her warnings were not heeded, Colonel Sharpe dwelt with great deliberation upon the best modes before them of consuming the rest of the week with profit.

"What say you, Beauchampe, to a morning at your friend Tiernan's—he will give us a rouse, I'm thinking; the next day with Coalter, and Saturday, what ho! for an elk-hunt! at all events, Barnabas must go to Coalter's—he's a client of his, and will never forgive the omission; and it is no less important that you should give him the elk-hunt also; he has a taste for hard riding, and it will do him good. He's getting stoutish, and a good shaking will keep his bulk within proper bounds. Certainly, he must have an elk-hunt."

"A like reason will make it necessary that you should share it also, colonel," said Beauchampe. "You partake, in similar degree, of the infirmity of flesh which troubles Mr. Barnabas."

"Ay, ay, but I am no candidate for the red-hat, which is the case with Barnabas, and which the conclave will religiously refuse to a man with a corporation."

"But you are after the seat of attorney-general," said Mr. Barnabas, with the placable smile of dullness.

"Granted; and for such an office a good corporation may be considered an essential, rather than anything else. It confers dignity, Hal. Now, the red-hatted gentry of the club are not expected to be dignified. The humor of the thing forbids it; and as a candidate for that communion, it is necessary that you should live on *soup maigre*, and 'seek the chase with hawk and hound,' as Earl Percy did. Besides, Beauchampe, he has a passion for it."

"I a passion for it?" said Barnabas.

"Yes, to be sure—what were all those stories you used to tell us of hunting in Tennessee; stories that used to set our hair on end at your hairbreadth escapes. Either we must suppose you to have grown suddenly old and timid, or we must suppose, that, in telling those stories of your prowess, you were amusing us with some pleasant fictions. That's a dilemma for you, Barnabas, if you disclaim a passion for an elk-hunt now."

"No! by Jupiter, I told you nothing but the truth," said Barnabas, solemnly.

"I believe it," said Sharpe, with equal solemnity, "I believe it, and believe that the passion continues."

"Well," said the other, "I can't altogether deny that it does, but it has been somewhat cooled by other pursuits and associations."

"It must be warmed again," responded Sharpe; "remember, Beauchampe, be sure to make up a party for Saturday."

"We include you in it?" asked Beauchampe.

"Ay, ay—if I happen to be 'i' the vein.' But, you know, like Corporal Nym, I'm a person of humors. I may not have the fit upon me, or I may have some other fit; and may prefer remaining at home to read poetry with our fair hostess."

The speaker glanced significantly at Mrs. Beauchampe as he said these words. Their eyes encountered. Hers wore an expression of the soberest sadness. As if provoked by the speech and the glance, she said, in the most deliberate language, while her look was full of the most rebukeful and warning expression:—

"I thought you were to leave this morning for Frankfort, Colonel Sharpe. I derived that impression somehow from something that was said last evening."

Beauchampe turned full upon his wife with a stern look of equal astonishment and inquiry. Mr. Barnabas was aghast; and Colonel Sharpe himself for a moment lost his equilibrium, and was speechless, while his eyes looked the incertitude which he felt. He was the first, however, to recover; and, with a sort of legal dexterity, assuming as really having been his own the determination which she had suggested as being made by him, he replied:—

"True, my dear madam, that was my purpose yesterday; but the kind entreaties of our host, and the pleasant projects which we discussed last night, persuaded me to yield to the temptation, and to stay till Sunday."

The speaker bowed politely, and returned the severe glance of the lady with a look of mingled conciliation and doubt. For the first time, he began to feel apprehensive that he had mistaken her, and perhaps himself. She was a woman of prodigious strength of soul, indomitable resolution, and the courage of a gigantic man. Never did words proceed more deliberately, more evenly, from human lips, than did the reply from hers:—

"That can not be, Colonel Sharpe. It is necessary that you should keep your first resolution. Mr. Beauchampe can no longer accommodate you in his dwelling."

"How, Mrs. Beauchampe!" exclaimed the husband, starting to his feet, and confronting her. She had risen while speaking, and was preparing to leave the room. She looked on him with a countenance mournful and humble—very different from that which she wore in addressing the other.

"Speak, Anna—say, Mrs. Beauchampe!" exclaimed the husband, "what does this mean? This to my guests—to my friend!"

"He is not your friend, Beauchampe—nor mine! But let me pass—I can not speak here!"

She left the room, and Beauchampe, with a momentary glance at Sharpe, full of bewilderment, hurried after his wife.

"What's this, Sharpe, in the devil's name?" demanded Barnabas in consternation.

"The devil himself, Barnabas!" said Sharpe. "I'm afraid the Jezebel means to blow me, and tell everything!"

"But you told me last night that all was well and going right."

"So I thought! I fear I was mistaken! At all events, I must prepare for the worst. Have you any weapons about you?"

"My dirk!"

"Give it me: my pistols are in the saddle-bags."

"But what shall I do?"

"*You* are in no danger. Give me the dirk, and hurry out and have our horses ready. D—n the woman!—who could have believed it!"

"Ah, you're always so sanguine!" began Barnabas; but the other interrupted him:—

"Pshaw! this is no time for lecturing. Your wisdom is eleventh-hour wisdom! It is too late here. Hurry, and prepare yourself and the horses, while I go to the room and get the saddle-bags ready. If I am blown, my start can not be too sudden."

Barnabas, always pliant, disappeared instantly; and Sharpe, concealing the dirk in his bosom, with the handle convenient to his clutch, found himself unpleasantly alone.

"Who the d—l could have thought it? What a woman! But it may not be as bad as I fear. She may invent something to answer the purpose of getting me off. She certainly can not tell the whole. No, no! that would be to suppose her mad. And mad she may be: I had not thought of that! Now, I think of it, she looks cursedly like an insane woman. That wild, fierce gleam of her eye—those accents—and, indeed, everything since I have been here! Certainly, had she not been mad, it must have been as I wished. I *could* not have been deceived—never *was* deceived yet—by a sane woman! It must be so; and, if so, it *is* possible that she may blurt out the whole. I must be prepared. Beauchampe's as fierce as a vulture when roused. I've seen that in him before. I must get my pistols—though, in going for them, I may meet him on the stairs. Well, if I do, I am armed! He is scarcely more powerful than myself. Yet I would not willingly have him grapple with me, if only because he is *her* husband. The very thought of *her* makes me half a coward! And yet I must be prepared. It must be done!"

Such were his reflections. He advanced to the entrance. The footsteps of Beauchampe were heard rapidly striding

across the chamber overhead. The criminal recoiled as he heard them. A tremor shot through his limbs. He clutched the dagger in his bosom, set his teeth firmly, and waited for a moment at the entrance.

The sounds subsided above. He thrust his head through the doorway, into the passage, and leaned forward in the act of listening. The renewed silence which now prevailed in the house gave him fresh courage. He darted up the steps, sought his chamber, and with eager, trembling hands caught up and examined his pistols. Both were loaded, and he thrust them into the pockets of his coat; then seizing his own and the saddle-bags of his companion, he darted out of the chamber, and down the stairs, with footsteps equally light and rapid.

Once more in the hall, and well armed, he was more composed, but as little prepared, morally, for events as before. There was a heavy fear upon his spirit. The consciousness of guilt is a terrible queller of one's manhood. He waited impatiently for the return of Barnabas. At such a moment, even the presence of one whom he estimated rather humbly, and with some feelings of contempt, was grateful to his enfeebled spirit; and the appearance of the horses at the door, and the return of his friend, had the effect of re-enlivening him to a degree which made him blush for the feeling of apprehension which he had so lately entertained.

"All's ready!—will you ride?" demanded Barnabas, picking up his saddle-bags. The worthy coadjutor was by no means audacious in his courage. Sharpe hesitated.

"It may be only a false alarm, after all," said he; "we had better wait and see."

"I think not," said the former. "There was no mistaking the words, and as little the looks. She's a very resolute woman."

Colonel Sharpe was governed by the anxieties of guilt as well as its fears. The painful desire to hear and know

to what extent the revelations of the wife had gone- a half confidence that *all* would not be told — that some loop-hole would be left for retreat — and the further conviction that, at all events, whatever was the nature of her story to her husband, it was quite as well that he should know it at one moment as another — encouraged him to linger; and this resolve, with the force of an habitual will, he impressed upon his reluctant companion.

Leaving them to their suspense below, let us join the husband and wife above stairs.

CHAPTER XXIX.

EXPLANATION — THE OATH RENEWED.

"Take the dagger —
The victim waits! Thy honor and my safety
Demand the stroke!" — *Old Play.*

"In the name of God, Mrs. Beauchampe!" — such was the address of her husband as he joined her in their chamber — "what is the meaning of all this?"

She silently took from the toilet a pair of pistols, and offered them to him.

"What mean you by these — by this treatment of my friends?"

"Your friends are villains! Colonel Sharpe and Alfred Stevens are the same person!"

"Impossible!" he replied, recoiling with horror from the proffered weapons.

"True as gospel, Beauchampe!"

"True?"

"True! before Heaven, I speak the truth, my husband! — a dreadful, terrible truth, which I would not speak were it possible not to do so!"

"And why has not this been told me before? Why has he been suffered to remain in your presence — nay, to be alone with you for hours – since his coming? Did you know him from the first to be the same man?"

"From the first!"

"Explain, then! — for God's sake, explain! You blind

me—you stun me! I am utterly unable to see this thing! How, if you knew him from the first, suffer for a moment the contagion of his presence?"

"This I can easily answer you, my husband. Bear with me patiently while I do so! I will lay bare to you my whole soul, and show you by what motives of forbearance I was governed, until driven to the course I have pursued by the bold insolence of this uncompromising villain."

She paused—pressed her head with her hands as if to subdue the tumult which was striving within; then, with an effort which seemed to demand her greatest energies, she proceeded with her speech.

She entered into an explanation of that change in her feelings and desires which had been consequent upon her marriage. She acknowledged the force of those new domestic ties which she had formed, in making her unwilling that any event should take place which should commit herself or husband in the eyes of the community, and bring about a disruption of those ties, or a further development of her story—which would be certain to follow, in the event of an issue between her husband and her seducer. With this change in her mood, prior to the appearance of this person and his identification with Colonel Sharpe, she had prayed that he might never reappear; and when he did—when he became the guest of her husband, and was regarded as his friend—it was her hope that a sense of his danger would have prompted him to make his visit short, and prevent him from again renewing it. Her own deportment was meant to be such as should produce this determination in his breast. But when this failed of its effect; when, in despite of warning, in defiance of danger, in the face of hospitality and friendship, the villain presumed to renew his loathsome overtures of guilt; when no hope remained that he would forbear; when it was seen that he was without generosity, and that neither the rebuke of her scorn nor the warnings of her anger could repel his

insolent advances—then it was that she felt compelled speak—then, and not before!

She had deferred this necessity to the last moment; she had been purposely slow. She had given the seducer every opportunity to withdraw in safety, and made the condition of his future security easy, by asking only that he would never seek or see her again!

She had striven in vain; and, failing to find the immunity she sought from her own strength and firmness, it was no longer possible to evade the necessity which forced her to seek it in the protection of her husband. It was now neces sary that he should comply with his oath, and for this reason she had placed the weapons of death in his hands. Henceforth, the struggle was his alone. Of the sort of duty to be done, no doubt could exist in either mind!

Such was the narrative which, with the coherence not only of a sane but a strong mind, and a will that no pain of body and pang of soul could overcome, she poured into the ears of her husband. We will not attempt to describe the agony, the utter recoil and shrinking of soul, with which he heard it. There is a point to which human passion sometimes arrives when all language fails of description; as, in a condition of physical suffering, the intensity of the pain is providentially relieved by utter unconsciousness and stupor. But, such was the surprise with which Beauchampe received the information of that identity between Alfred Stevens and his friend—his friend!—that the impression which followed from what remained of his wife's narrative was comparatively slight. You might trace the accumulation of pang upon pang, in his heart, as the story went on, by a slight convulsive movement of the lip—but the eye did not seem to speak. It was fixed and glassy, and so vacant, that its expression might have occasioned some apprehension in the mind of the wife, had her own intensity of suffering—however kept down—not been of so blinding and darkening a character.

When she had ended, he grasped the pistols, and hurried to the entrance, but as suddenly returned. He laid the weapons down upon the toilet.

"No!" he exclaimed—"not here! It must not be in this house. He has eaten at our board—he is beneath our roof. This threshold must not be stained with the blood of the guest!"

He looked at her as he spoke these words. But she did not note his glance. Her eyes were fixed; her hands were clasped; she did not seem to note his presence, and her head was bent forward as if she listened. A moment was passed in this manner, when, as he still looked, she turned suddenly and seemed only then to behold him.

"You are here!" she said; "where are the pistols?"

He did not answer; but, following the direction of his eye, she saw them on the toilet, and, striding toward them, fiercely and rapidly she caught them up from the place where they lay.

"What would you, Anna?" he asked, seizing her wrists.

"The wrong is mine!" she exclaimed. "My hand shall avenge it. It is sworn to it. I am prepared for it. Why should it be put upon another?"

"No!" he cried—while his brow gathered into a cloud of wrinkles—"no, woman! *You* are mine, and *your wrongs* are mine—mine only! *I* will avenge them: but I must avenge them as I think right—after my own fashion—in my own time. Fear not that I will. Believe that I am a man, with the feelings and the resolution of a man, and do not doubt that I will execute my oath—ay, even were it no oath—to the uttermost letter of the obligation! Give me the weapons!"

She yielded them. Her whole manner was subdued—her looks—her words.

"O Beauchampe, would that I could spare you this!"

"Do I wish it, Anna? Would I be spared? No, my wife! This duty is doubly incumbent on me now. This

reptile has made your wrong doubly that of your husband. Has he not renewed his criminal attempt under my own roof? This, this alone, would justify me in denying him its protection; but I will not. He shall not say he was entrapped! As the obligation is a religious one, I shall execute its laws with the deliberation of one who has a task from God before him. I will not violate the holy pledges of hospitality, though he *has* done so. While he remains in my threshold, it shall protect him. But fear not that vengeance shall be done. Before God, my wife, I renew my oath!"

He lifted his hand to heaven as he spoke, and she sunk upon her knees, and with her hands clasped his. Her lips parted in speech, and her murmurs reached his ears, but what she spoke was otherwise inaudible. He gently extricated himself from her embrace — went to the basin, and deliberately bathed his forehead in the cold water. She remained in her prostrate position, her face clasped in her hands, and prone upon the floor. Having performed his ablutions, Beauchampe turned and looked upon her steadfastly, but did not seek to raise her; and, after a moment's further delay, left the chamber and descended the stairs.

Then his wife started from her feet, and moved toward the toilet, where the weapons lay. Her hand was extended as if to grasp them, but she failed to do so, and staggered forward with the manner of one suddenly dizzy with blindness. With this feeling she turned toward the bed, and reached it in time to save herself a fall upon the floor. She sank forward, face downward, upon the couch; and while a husky sound — a feeble sort of laughter, wild and hysteric — issued from her throat, she lost all sense of the agony that racked her soul and brain, in the temporary unconsciousness of both; and which, but for the relief of this timely apathy, must have been fatal to life.

CHAPTER XXX.

REPRIEVE AND FLIGHT.

When Colonel Sharpe heard the descending footsteps of Beauchampe as he came down the stairs, he asked Barnabas to go into the passage-way and meet him — a request which made the other look a little blank.

"There is no sort of danger to you, and you hear he walks slowly, not like a man in a passion. I doubt if she has told him *all;* perhaps she has told him nothing. At all events, you will be decidedly the best person to receive intelligence of what she has told. I'm thinking it's a false alarm after all; but, whether true or false, it can in no manner affect you. *You* are safe — go out, meet him, and learn how far I am so."

It has been seen that the will of the superior man, in spite of all first opposition, usually had its way with the inferior. Mr. Barnabas, however reluctant, submitted to the wishes of his companion, and with some misgivings, and with quite slow steps, left the room in order to meet with the husband, of whose rage such apprehensions were formed in both their minds. Sharpe, though he had expressed himself so confidently, or at least so hopefully, to Barnabas, was really full of apprehension. The moment that the latter left the room, he took out his pistols, deliberately cocked them, and placing them behind his back, moving backward a little farther from the entrance; preparing himself in this

manner for the encounter—if that became inevitable—with the angry husband.

But the danger seemed to have passed away. Silence followed. The steps of Beauchampe were no longer heard, and, moving toward one of the front windows, the criminal beheld the two, already at a distance, and about to disappear behind the copse of wood that spread itself in front.

Sharpe breathed more freely, and began to fancy that the cloud had dispersed, that the danger was overblown. He was mistaken. Let us join Beauchampe and his companion.

"Mr. Barnabas," said the former, "I speak to you still as to a gentleman, as I believe you have had no knowledge of the past crime of Colonel Sharpe, and no participation in his present villany."

"Such was the opening remark of Beauchampe, when he had led the other from the house. Mr. Barnabas was prompt in denial and disclaimer.

"Crime—Beauchampe—villany! Surely, you can not think I had any knowledge—any participation—ah!—do you suppose—do you think I knew anything about it—"

"About *what?*" demanded the suspicious Beauchampe, coolly fixing his eyes, with a keen glance, upon the embarrassed speaker.

"Nay, my dear Beauchampe—that's the question," said the other. "You speak of some crime, some villany, as I understand you, of which our friend Sharpe has been guilty. If it be true, that he has been guilty of any, you are right in supposing that I know nothing about it. Nay, my dear fellow, don't think it strange or impertinent, on my part, if I venture a conjecture—mark me, my dear fellow, a mere supposition—that there must be some mistake in this matter. I can't think that Sharpe, a fellow who stands so high, whom we both know so well and have known so long, such an excellent fellow in fact, so cursed smart, and so clever a companion, can have been such a d——d fool as to have

practised any villany, at least upon a gentleman whom we both love and esteem so much as yourself."

"There's no mistake, Mr. Barnabas!" said the other, gravely. "This man is a villain, and has been practising his villany to my dishonor, while in my house and enjoying my confidence and hospitality."

"You don't say so! it's scarce possible, Beauchampe! The crime's too monstrous. I still think, I mean, I still hope, that there's some very strange mistake in the matter which can be explained."

"Unhappily, sir, there is none. There is no mistake, and nothing needs explanation!"

"That's unfortunate, very unfortunate! May I ask, my dear fellow, what's the offence?"

"Surely, of this I drew you forth to tell you, in order that you might tell him. I do not wish to take his life in my own dwelling, though his crime might well justify me in forgetting the sacred obligations of hospitality—might justify me, indeed, in putting him to death even though his hands grasped the very horns of the altar. He has busied himself, while in my dwelling, in seeking to dishonor its mistress. While we rode, sir, and in our absence, he has toiled for the seduction of my wife. That's his crime! You will tell him that I know all!"

"Great God! What madness, what folly, what could have made him do so? But, my dear Mr. Beauchampe, as he has failed, not succeeded, eh?"

The speaker stopped. It was not easy to finish such a sentence.

"I can not guess what you would say, Mr. Barnabas, nor, perhaps, is it necessary. You will please to go back to your companion, and say to him that he will instantly leave the dwelling which he has endeavored to dishonor. I see that your horses are both ready—a sign, sir, that Colonel Sharpe has not been entirely unconscious of this necessity. I would fain hope, Mr. Barnabas, that, in pre

paring to depart yourself, you acknowledge no more serious obligation to do so, than the words of my wife, conveyed at the breakfast-table!"

The sentence was expressed inquiringly, and the keen, searching glance of Beauchampe, declared a lurking suspicion that made it very doubtful to Barnabas whether the husband did not fully suspect the auxiliary agency which he had really exhibited in the dishonorable proceedings of Sharpe. He felt this, and could not altogether conceal his confusion, though he saw the necessity of a prompt reply.

"My dear Beauchampe, was it not enough to make a gentleman think of trooping, with bag and baggage, when the lady of the house gives him notice to quit."

"But the notice was not given to *you*, Mr. Barnabas."

"Granted; but Sharpe and myself were friends, you know, and came together, and being the spokesman in the case, you see—"

"Enough, Mr. Barnabas; I ask no explanation from you. I do not say to you that it is necessary that you should quit along with Colonel Sharpe, but as your horse is ready, perhaps it is quite as well that you should."

"Hem! such was my purpose, Mr. Beauchampe."

"Yes, sir; and you will do me the favor for which I requested your company, to say to him that the whole history of his conduct is known to me. In order that he should have no further doubts on this subject, you will suffer me to intrude upon you a painful piece of domestic history."

"My dear Beauchampe, if it's so very painful—"

"I perceive, Mr. Barnabas, that what I am about to relate will not have the merit of novelty to you."

"Indeed, sir, but it will—I mean, I reckon it will. I really am very ignorant of what you intend to mention. I am, sir, upon my honor, I am!"

Beauchampe regarded the creature with a cold smile of the most utter contempt, and when he had ended, resumed:—

"Tell Colonel Sharpe, if you please, that, before I married Mrs. Beauchampe, she herself told me the whole history of Alfred Stevens and her own unhappy frailty, while she swore me to avenge her dishonor. Tell him that I *will* avenge it, and that he must prepare himself accordingly. My house confers on him the temporary privilege of safety. He will leave it as soon as convenient after you return to it. I will seek him only after he has reached his own; and when we meet it is with the one purpose of taking his life or losing my own. There can be no half struggle between us. There can be no mercy. Blood, alone! the blood of life—the life itself—can acquit me of my sworn obligation. It may be his life, or it may be mine; but he must understand, that, while I live, the forfeit stands against him, not to be redeemed but in his blood! This is all, sir, that I have to say."

"But, my dear Beauchampe—"

"No more, Mr. Barnabas, if you please. There can be nothing more between us. You will understand me further, when I tell you that I am not assured of your entire freedom from this last contemplated crime of Colonel Sharpe. I well know your subserviency to his wishes, and but for the superior nature of his crime, and that I do not wish to distract my thoughts from the sworn and solemn purpose before me, I should be compelled to show you that I regard the weakness which makes itself the minister of crime as a quality which deserves its chastisement also. Leave me, if you please, sir. I have subdued myself with great difficulty, to the task I have gone through, and would not wish to be provoked into a forgetfulness of my forbearance. You are in possession of all that I mean to say—your horses are ready—I suspect your friend is ready also! Good morning, sir!"

The speaker turned into the copse, and Mr. Barnabas was quite too prudent a person to follow him with any further expostulations. The concluding warning of Beau-

champe was not lost upon him; and, glad to get off so well, he hurried back to the house, where Sharpe was awaiting him with an eagerness of anxiety which was almost feverish.

"Well—what has he to say? You were long enough about it!"

"The delay was mine. He was as brief as charity. He knows all."

"All! impossible!"

"All—every syllable! Nay, says he knew the whole story of Alfred Stevens and of his wife's frailty before he married her. Begs me particularly to tell you *that*, and to say, moreover, that he was sworn to avenge her wrong before marriage."

"Then she told me nothing but the truth! What a blind ass I have been not to know it, and believe her! I should have known that she was like no other woman under the sun!"

"It's too late now for such reflections: the sooner we're off the better!"

"Ay, ay! but what more does he say?"

"That you are safe till you reach your own home; but, after that, never! It's your life or his! He swears it!"

"But was he furious?"

"No—by no means."

"Then I'm deceived in the man as well as the woman! If *he* lets me off now, I suspect there's little to fear."

"Don't deceive yourself. He looked ready to break out at a moment's warning. It was evidently hard work with him to contain himself. Some fantastic notion about the obligations of hospitality alone prevented him from seeking instant redress."

"Fantastic or not, Barnabas, the reprieve is something. I don't fear the cause, however bad, if I can stave it off for a term or two. Witnesses may die, in the meantime; principals become unsettled; new judges, with new *dicta*,

come in, and there is always hope in conflicting authorities. To horse, *mon ami!*—a reprieve is a long step to a full pardon."

"It's something, certainly," said the other, "and I'm sure I'm glad of it; but don't deceive yourself. Be on your guard. If ever there was a man seriously savage in his resolution, Beauchampe is."

"Pshaw! Barnabas!—you were ever an alarmist!" replied Sharpe, whose elasticity had returned to him with the withdrawal of the momentary cause of apprehension.

"We shall tame this monster, however savage, if you only give us time. Let him come to Frankfort, and we'll set the whole corps of 'Red-Hats,' yours among 'em, at work to get him to the conclave; and one Saturday's bout, well plied, will mellow body and soul in such manner that he will never rage afterward, however he may roar. I tell you, my lad, time is something more than money. It subdues hate and anger, softens asperity, wakens up new principles, makes old maids young ones—ay, my boy, and"—here, looking up over his horse, which he was just about to mount, at the windows of Beauchampe's chamber, and closing the sentence in a whisper—"ay, my boy, and may even enable me to overcome this sorceress—this tigress, if you prefer it—make her forget that she is a wife—forget everything, but the days when I taught her her first lessons in loving!"

"Sharpe," exclaimed the other in a sort of husky horror, "you are a perfect dare-devil, to speak so in the very den of the lion?"

"Ay, but it is while thinking of the lioness."

"Keep me from the claws of both!" ejaculated Barnabas, with an honest terror, as he struck spurs into the flanks of his horse.

"I do not now feel as if I feared either!" replied the other.

"Don't halloo till out of the woods!"

"No!—but, Barnabas, do you really think that this woman is sincere in giving me up?"

"Surely! How can I think otherwise?"

"Ah, my boy, you know nothing of the sex."

"Well—but she has told him all. How do you explain that?"

"She has had her reasons. She perhaps finds, or fancies, that Beauchampe suspects. She hopes to blind him by this apparent frankness. She's not in earnest."

"D—n such manœuvring, say I!"

"Give us time, Barnabas—time, my boy, and I shall have her at my feet yet! I do not doubt that, with the help of some of our boys, I shall baffle *him;* and I will never lose sight of *her* while I have sight. I have felt more passion for that woman than I ever felt for any woman yet, or ever expect to feel for another; and, if scheme and perseverance will avail for anything, she shall yet be mine!"

"If such were your feelings for her, why didn't you marry her in Charlemont?"

"So I would have done—if it had been necessary; but who pays for his fruit when he can get it for nothing?"

"True," replied the other, evidently struck by the force of this *dictum* in moral philosophy—"that's very true; but the fruit has its Argus now, if it had not then; and the paws of Briareus may be upon your throat, if you look too earnestly over the wall. My counsel to you is, briefly, that you arrive with all possible speed at the faith of the fox."

"What! sour grapes? No, no, Barnabas!—the grapes *are sweet*—as I do not think them entirely out of reach. As for the dragon, we shall yet contrive to 'calm the terrors of his claws.'"

So speaking, they rode out of sight, the courage of both

rising as they receded from the place of danger. Whether Sharpe really resolved on the reckless course which he expressed to his companion, or simply sought, with the inherent vanity of a small man, to excite the wonder of the latter, is of no importance to our narrative. In either case, his sense of morals and of society is equally and easily understood.

CHAPTER XXXI.

CHALLENGE.

Colonel Sharpe sat, one pleasant forenoon, in the snug parlor of his elegant mansion in the good city of Frankfort. It was a *dies non* with him. He had leisure, and his leisure was a leisure which had its sauce. It was a satisfactory leisure. The prospect of wealth with dignity was before him. Clients were numerous; fees liberal; his political party had achieved its triumph, and his own commission as attorney-general of the state was made out in the fairest characters. The world went on swimmingly. Truly, it was a blessed world. So one may fancy, with the wine and walnuts before him. Ah, how much of the beauty of this visible world depends on one's dessert—and digestion!

Colonel Sharpe's dessert was excellent, but his digestion not so good. Nay, there were some things that he could not digest; but of these, at the pleasant moment when we have thought proper to look in upon him, he did not think. His thoughts were rather agreeable than otherwise; perhaps we should say, rather exciting than agreeable. They were less sweet than piquant; but they were such as he did not seek to disperse. A man of the world relishes his bitters occasionally. It is your long-legged lad of eighteen who purses his lips while his eyes run water, as he imbibes the acrid but spicy flavor. Colonel Sharpe was no such boy. He could linger over the draught, and sip, with a

sense of relish, from the mingling but not discordant elements. He was no milksop. He had renounced the natural tastes at a very early day.

He thought of Margaret Cooper—we should say Mrs. Beauchampe, but that, when he recalled her to his memory, she always came in the former, never in the latter character. He did not like to think of her as the wife of another. The reflection made him sore; though, to think of her was always a source of pleasure in a greater or less degree. But he had not forgotten the husband; and now, in connection with the wife, he felt himself unavoidably compelled to think of him. His countenance assumed a meditative aspect. There was a gathering frown upon his brow in spite of his successes. At this moment a rap was heard at the door, and Mr. Barnabas was announced.

"Ha! Barnabas—how d'ye do?"

"Well—when did you get back?"

"Last night, after dark."

"Yes—I looked in yesterday and you were not here then. What news bring you?"

"None! Have you any here?"

"As little. It's enough to know that all's right. We are quite joyful here—nothing to dash our triumph."

"That's well, and our triumph *is* complete; but"—with an air of abstraction—"what do you hear of Beauchampe?"

"Not a word—but he's in Frankfort!"

"Ha! indeed!"

"Was here two days ago. Haven't you heard from him?"

"Not a syllable."

"But how could you—going to and fro, and so brief a time in any place, it was scarcely possible to find you!"

"I doubt if he'll do anything, Barnabas. The affair will be made so much worse by stirring. He'll not think of it—he's very proud—very sensitive—very sensible to ridicule!"

"I don't know. I hope he won't. But he's as strange an animal as the woman, his wife; and, I tell you, there was a damned sour seriousness about him when he spoke to me on the subject, that makes me apprehensive that he'll keep his word. The ides of March are not over yet."

Sharpe's gravity increased. His friend rose to depart.

"Where do you go?"

"To Folker's. I have some business there. I just heard that you were here, and looked in to say how happy we all are in our successes."

"You will sup with me to-night, Barnabas. I want you: I feel dull."

"The devil you do—what, and just made attorney-general!"

"Even so! Honors are weighty."

"Not the less acceptable for that. Glamis thou art—Cawdor shalt be—and let me be your weird sister, and proclaim, yet further—'Thou shalt be king hereafter!' governor, I mean."

"Ah! you are sharp, this morning, Barnabas," said Sharpe, his muscles relaxing into a pleasant smile. "I shall expect you to-night, if it be only to hear the repetition of these agreeable predictions."

"I will not fail you! addio!"

Colonel Sharpe sat once more alone. Pleasant indeed were the fancies which the words of Mr. Barnabas had awakened in his mind. He murmured in the strain of dramatic language, which the quotation of his friend had suggested, as he paced the apartment to and fro:—

"'I know I'm thane of Glamis,
But how of Cawdor—
——And to be king,
Stands not within the prospect of belief.'

Ay, but it does;" he proceeded in the more sober prose of his own reflections; "The steps are fair and easy. Bar-

nabas is no fool in such matters, though no wit. He knows the people. He can sound them as well as any man. This suggestion does not come from himself. No—no! It comes from a longer head. It must be Clay! Hem! this is to be thought upon! *His* word against a thousand pounds! If he thinks so, it is as good as done; and Barnabas is only an echo, when he says, 'Thou shalt be king hereafter!' Poor Barnabas! how readily he takes his color from his neighbor."

A rap at the door arrested these pleasant reflections. The soliloquist started and grew pale. There was surely a meaning in that rap. It was not that of an ordinary acquaintance. It wanted freedom, rapidity. It was very deliberate and measured. One—two—three!—you could count freely in the intervals. A strange voice was heard at the door.

"Colonel Sharpe is in town—is he at home!"

The servant answered in the affirmative, and appeared a moment after, followed by a stranger—a gentleman of dark, serious complexion, whose face almost declared his business. The host felt an unusual degree of discomposure for which he could not so easily account.

"Be seated, sir, if you please. I have not the pleasure of your name."

"Covington, sir, is my name—John A. Covington."

"Covington—John A. Covington! I have the pleasure of knowing a gentleman whose name very much resembles yours. I know John W. Covington."

"I am a very different person," answered the stranger. —"I have not the honor of being ranked among *your* friends.

The stranger spoke very coldly. A brief pause followed his words, in which Colonel Sharpe's discomposure rather underwent increase. The keen eye of Covington observed his face, while he very deliberately drew from his pocket a

paper which he handed to Sharpe, who took it with very sensible agitation of nerve.

"Do me the favor, sir, to read that. It is from Mr. Beauchampe. He tells me you are prepared for it. It is open, you see: I am aware of its contents."

"From Beauchampe—"

"*Mr.* Beauchampe, sir," said the visiter, coolly correcting the freedom of the speaker.

"This paper, as you will see by the date, sir, has been some time in my hands. Your absence in the country, alone prevented its delivery."

"Yes, sir"—said Sharpe, slowly, and turning over the envelope—"yes, sir; this, I perceive, is a peremptory challenge, sir?"

"It is."

"But, Mr. Covington, there may be explanations, sir."

"None, sir! Mr. Beauchampe tells me that this is impossible. He adds, moreover, that you know it. There is but one issue, he assures me between you, and that is life or death."

"Really, sir, there is no good reason for this. Mr. Covington, you are a man of the world. You know what is due to society. You will not lend yourself to any measure of unnecessary bloodshed. You have a right, sir—surely you have a right, sir, to interpose, and accept some more qualified atonement—perhaps, sir—an apology—the expression of my sincere regret and sorrow, sir—"

The other shook his head coldly—

"My friend leaves me none."

"But, sir, if you knew the cause of this hostility—if—"

"I do sir!" was the stern reply.

"Indeed! But are you sure that you have heard it exactly as it is. There are causes which qualify offence—"

"I believe, Mr. Beauchampe, sir, in preference to any other witness. This offence, sir, admits of none. You will permit me to add, though extra-official, that my friend deals

with you very magnanimously. The provocation is of a sort which deprives you of any claim of courtesy. May I ave your answer, sir, to the only point to which this letter relates! Will you refer me to your friend?"

"Sir — Mr. Covington — I will not fight Mr. Beauchampe!"

"Indeed, sir! — can it be possible!' exclaimed Covington, rising from his chair and regarding the speaker with surprise.

"No, sir! I *can not* fight him. I have wronged him too greatly. I can not lift weapon against his life!"

"Colonel Sharpe — this will never do! You are a Kentuckian! You are regarded as a Kentucky gentleman! I say nothing on the score of your claim to this character. Let me remind you of the penalties which will follow this refusal to do my friend justice."

"I know them, sir — I know them all. I defy them — will bear them, but I can not fight Beauchampe!"

"You will be disgraced, sir: I must post you!"

Sharpe strode the apartment hastily. His cheek was flushed. He felt the humiliation of his position. In ordinary matters, in the usual spirit of society, he was no coward. We have seen how readily he fought with William Calvert. But he could not meet Beauchampe — he could not nerve himself to the encounter.

"I can not, will not fight Beauchampe!" was his muttered ejaculation. "No! I have wronged him — wronged her! I dare not meet him. I can never do it!"

"Be not rash, Colonel Sharpe," said the other. "Think of it again before you give me such an answer. I will give you three hours for deliberation: I will call again at four."

"No, sir — no, Mr. Covington — the wrongs I have done to Beauchampe are known — probably well known. The world will understand that I can not fight him — that my offence is of such a nature, that, to lift weapon against *him*,

would be monstrous. You may post me, sir; but no one who knows me will believe that it is fear that makes me deny this meeting. They will know all; they will acquit me of the imputation of cowardice."

"And how should they know," demanded Covington sternly, "unless you make them acquainted with the facts, and thus add another to my friend's causes of provocation?"

"Nay, Mr. Covington, he himself told Mr. Barnabas."

"True, sir; but that was in a special communication to yourself, which implied confidence, and must have secrecy. My friend will have his remedy against Mr. Barnabas, if he does not against you, if *he* speaks what he should not. There is a way, sir, to muzzle your barking dogs."

"It is known to others—Mr. William Calvert, with whom I fought on this very quarrel."

"Ah! that is new to me; but as you fought in this very quarrel with Mr. Calvert, it seems to me that your objection fails. You must fight with Mr. Beauchampe also on the same quarrel."

"Never, sir! You have my answer—I will not meet *him!*"

"Do not mistake your position with the public, Colonel Sharpe. The extent of the wrong which you have done to Beauchampe only makes your accountability the greater. Nobody will acquit you on this score; nay, any effort to make known to the people the true cause of Mr. Beauchampe's hostility will make it obvious that you seek rather to excuse your cowardice, than to show forbearance, or to make atonement. Truly, they will regard that as a very strange sort of remorse which publishes the shame of the wife in order to justify a refusal to meet the husband!"

"I will not publish it—Beauchampe has already done so."

"It is known to two persons, sir, through him. It need not be known to more. Colonel Calvert is a friend of mine.

He is not the man to speak of the affair. Besides, I will communicate to him on the subject, and secure his silence. You shall have no refuge of this sort."

"I have answered you, Mr. Covington," said Sharpe, doggedly.

"I must post you, then, as a scoundrel and a coward!"

Sharpe turned upon the speaker with a look of suddenly-roused fury in his face, but, swallowing the word which rose to his lips, he turned away. The other proceeded coolly:—

"This shall be done, sir; and I must warn you that the affair will not end here. Mr. Beauchampe will disgrace you in the public streets."

The sweat trickled from the brows of Sharpe in thick drops such as precede the torrents of the thunderstorm. He strove to speak, but the convulsive emotions of his bosom effectually baffled utterance; and, with dilated eyes and laboring breast, he strode the floor, utterly incapable of self-control. Covington lingered.

"You will repent this, Colonel Sharpe. You will recall me when too late. Suffer me to see you this afternoon for your answer."

The other advanced to him, then turned away; once more approached, and again receded. A terrible strife was at work within him; but, when he did find words, they expressed no bolder determination than before. Covington regarded him with equal pity and contempt, as he turned away evidently dissatisfied and disappointed.

He was scarcely gone when the miserable man found words:—

"God of heaven, that I should feel thus!—that I should be so unmanned! Why is this? why is the strength denied me—the courage—which never failed before? It is not too late. He has scarcely left the step! I will recall him. He shall have another answer!"—and, with this late resolution, he darted to the entrance and laid his hand upon

the knob of the door; but the momentary impulse had already departed. He left it unopened. He recoiled from the entrance, and, striking his hands against his forehead, groaned in all the novel and unendurable bitterness of this unwonted humiliation.

"And this is the man—Cawdor, Glamis, all!—king hereafter, too, as Mr. Barnabas promised—echoing, of course, the language of that great political machinist, Mr. Clay. Ha! ha! ha!"

Did some devil growl this commentary in the ears of the miserable man? He heard it, and shuddered from head to foot.

CHAPTER XXXII.

PROGRESS OF PASSION.

LET nobody imagine that a sense of shame implies remorse or repentance. Nay, let them not be sure that it implies anything like forbearance in the progress of offence. It was not so with our attorney-general. The moment he recovered, in any fair degree, his composure, he despatched a messenger for his friend Barnabas. He, good fellow, came at the first summons. We will not say that his footsteps were not absolutely quickened by the recollection that it was just then the dinner-hour; and, possibly, some fancy took possession of his mind, leading him to the strange but pleasant notion that Sharpe had suddenly stumbled upon some *bonne bouche* in the market-place, of particular excellence, of which he was very anxious that his friend should partake. The supper, be it remarked, was no less an obligation still! Conceptive Mr. Barnabas! Certainly, he had some such idea. The *bonne bouche* quickened his movements. He came seasonably. The dinner was not consumed; perhaps not quite ready: but, for the *bonne bouche*—alas! *Sic transit gloria mundi!*

Such is the inscription, at least, upon this one pleasant hope of our amiable philosopher. There was a morsel for his digestion, or rather for that of his friendly entertainer; but, unhappily, it was one that neither was well prepared to swallow. Mr. Barnabas was struck dumb by the intelligence which he heard. He was not surprised that Beau-

champe had sent a challenge: his surprise, amounting to utter consternation, was that his friend should have refused it. He was so accustomed to the usual bold carriage of Colonel Sharpe—knew so well his ordinary promptness—nay, had seen his readiness on former occasions to do battle, right or wrong, with word or weapon—that he was taken all aback with wonder at a change so sudden and unexpected. Besides, it must be recollected that Mr. Barnabas was brought up in that school of an earlier period, throughout the whole range of southern and western country, which rendered it the point of honor to yield redress at the first summons, and in whatever form the summoner pleased to require. That school was still one of authority, not merely with Mr. Barnabas, but with the country; and the loss of caste was one of those terrible social consequences of any rejection of this authority which he had not the courage to consider without absolute horror. When he did speak, the friends had changed places. They no longer stood in the old relation to each other. Instead of Colonel Sharpe's being the superior will, while that of Barnabas was submission, the latter grew suddenly strong, almost commanding.

"But, Sharpe, you *must* meet him. By Jupiter, it won't do! You're disgraced for ever, if you don't. You can't escape. You must fight him."

"I can not, Barnabas! I was never so unnerved in my life before. I can not meet him. I can not lift weapon against the husband of Margaret Cooper."

"Be it so; but, at all events, receive his fire."

"Even for this I am unprepared. I tell you, Barnabas, I never felt so like a cur in all my life. I never knew till now what it was to fear."

"Shake it off; it's only a passing feeling. When you're up, and facing him, you will cease to feel so."

The other shook his head with an expression of utter despair and self-abandonment.

"By God, I know better!" exclaimed Barnabas warmly; "I've seen you on the ground—I've seen you fight. There was that chap Calvert—"

"Barnabas, it is in vain that you expostulate. I *have* fought—have been in frequent strifes with men, and brave men too—but never knew such feelings as oppress me now, and have oppressed me ever since I had this message. Do not suppose me insensible to the shame. It burns in my brain with agony; it rives my bosom with a choking and continual spasm. A hundred times, since Covington has been gone, have I started up with the view to sending him a message, declaring myself ready to meet his friend; but as often has this cursed feeling come upon me, paralyzing the momentary courage, and depriving me of all power of action. I feel that I can not meet Beauchampe—I feel that I dare not."

"Great God! what are we to do? Think, my dear fellow, what is due to your station—to your position in the party! Remember, you are just now made attorney-general: you are the observed of all observers. Everything depends upon what exhibition you make now. Get over this difficulty—man yourself for this meeting—and the rest is easy. Another year puts you at the very head of the party."

"I have thought of all these things, Barnabas; and one poor month ago, had an angel of heaven come and assured me that they would have failed to provoke me to the encounter with any foe, however terrible, I should have flouted the idle tidings. Now, I can not."

"You must! What will they say at the club? You'll be expelled, Sharpe—think of that! You'll be cut by every member. Covington will post you. Nay, ten to one but Beauchampe will undertake to horsewhip you."

"I trust I shall find courage to face him then, Barnabas, though I could not now. Look you, Barnabas—something can be done in another way. Beauchampe can be acted on."

"How—how can that be done?"

"Two or three judicious fellows can manage it It is only to show him that any prosecution of this affair necessarily leads to the public disgrace of his wife. It is easy to show him that, though he may succeed in dishonoring me, the very act that does it is a public advertisement of her shame."

"So it is," said the other.

"Something more, Barnabas. It might be intimated to Covington that, as Margaret Cooper had a child—"

"Did she, indeed?"

"So I ascertained by accident. She had on before leaving Charlemont."

"Indeed!—well?"

"Well—it might have the effect of making him quiet to show him that this child was—"

The rest of the sentence was whispered in the ears of his companion.

"The d—l it was!" exclaimed the other. "But is that certain, Sharpe?—for, if so, it acquits you altogether. The color alone would be conclusive."

"Certainly it would. Now, some hint of this kind to Covington, or to Beauchampe himself—"

"By Jupiter, I shouldn't like to be the man to tell him, however! He's such a bulldog!"

"Through his friend, then. It might be done, Barnabas; and it can't be doubted that the dread of such a report would effectually discourage him from any prosecution of this business."

"So it might—so it would; but—"

"Barnabas, you must get it done."

"But, my dear colonel—"

"You must save me, Barnabas—relieve me of this difficulty. You know my power—my political power—you see my strength. I can serve you—you can not doubt my

willingness to serve you; but if this power is lost—if I am disgraced by this fellow—we are all lost."

"True—very true. It must be done. I will see to it. Make yourself easy. I will set about it as soon as dinner's over."

Here the politic Mr. Barnabas looked round with an anxious questioning of the eye, which Colonel Sharpe understood.

"Ah! dinner—I had not thought of that, but it must be ready. Of course, you will stay and dine with me."

"Why, yes—though I have some famous mutton-chops awaiting me at home."

"Mine are doubtlessly as good."

We shall leave the friends to their pottage, without any unnecessary inquiry into the degree of appetite which they severally brought to its discussion. It may not be impertinent, however, to intimate, as a mere probability, that Mr. Barnabas, in the discussion of the affair, was the most able analyst of the two. The digestion of Colonel Sharpe was, at this period, none of the best. We have said as much before.

For that matter, neither was Beauchampe's. The return of Covington, with the wholly unexpected refusal of Colonel Sharpe to meet and give him redress, utterly confounded him. Of course, he had the usual remedies. There was the poster—which may be termed a modern letter of credit—a sort of certificate of character, in one sense—carrying with it some such moral odor as, in the physical world, is communicated by the whizzing of a pullet's egg, addled in June, directed at the lantern visage of a long man, honored with a high place in the public eye, though scarcely at ease (because of his modesty), in the precious circumference of the pillory.

Beauchampe's friend was bound to post Colonel Sharpe. Beauchampe himself had the privilege of obliterating his shame, by making certain *cancelli* on the back of the

wrong-doer, with the skin of a larger but less respectable animal.

But were these remedies to satisfy Beauchampe? The cowskin might draw blood from the back of his enemy; but was that the blood which he had sworn to draw? His oath! his oath! that was the difficulty! The refusal of Colonel Sharpe to meet him in personal combat left his oath unobliterated—uncomplied with. The young man was bewildered by his rage and disappointment. This was an unanticipated dilemma.

"What is to be done, Covington?"

"Post him, at the courthouse, jail, and every hotel in town."

"Post him—and what's the good of that?"

"You disgrace him for ever!"

"That will not answer—that is nothing!"

"You can go further. Horsewhip him—cowskin him· cut his back to ribands, whenever you meet him in the open thoroughfare!"

"Did you tell him that I would do so?"

"I did!"

"It did not move him? What said he then?"

"Still the same! He would not fight *you*—could not lift weapon against *your* life."

"The villain!—the black-hearted, base, miserable villain? Covington, you will go with me?"

"Surely! You mean to post him, or cowhide him—or both?"

"No, no! That's not what I mean. I must have his blood—his life!"

"That's quite another matter, Beauchampe. I do not see that you can do more than I have told you. He is a coward: you must proclaim him as such. Your poster does that. He is a villain—has wronged you. You will punish him for the wrong. Your horsewhip does that! You can do no more, Beauchampe."

"Ay, but I must, Covington. Your poster is nothing, and the whip is nothing. I am sworn to take his life or lose my own!"

"I can do no more than I have told you. I will back you to this extent—no further."

"I can force him to fight me," said Beauchampe.

"In what way?"

"By assaulting him with my weapon, after offering him another."

"How, if he refuses to receive it?"

"He can not—surely—he *will* not refuse."

"He will! I tell you, he will refuse. The man is utterly frightened. I never witnessed such unequivocal signs of cowardice in any man."

"Then is he wonderfully changed."

A servant entered at this moment, and handed Beauchampe a letter. It was from his wife. Its contents were brief:—

. . . . "I do not hear from you, Beauchampe—I do not see you. You were to have returned yesterday. Come to me. Let me see you once more. I tremble for your safety." . . . .

The traces of an agony which the words did not express were clearly shown in the irregular, sharp lines of the epistle.

"I will go to her at once. I will meet you to-morrow, Covington, when we will discuss this matter further."

"The sooner you take the steps I propose, the better," said Covington. "The delay of a day to post him, is, perhaps, nothing; but you must not permit the lapse of more."

"I shall *not* post him, Covington. That would seem to mock my vengeance, and to preclude it. No, no! posting will not do. The scourging may; but even that does not satisfy me *now*. To-morrow—we shall meet to-morrow."

Let us go with the husband and rejoin Mrs. Beauchampe. A week had wrought great changes in her appearance. Her eyes have sunken, and the glazed intensity of their stare is almost that of madness. Her voice is slow—subdued almost to a whisper.

"It is not done!" she said, her lip touching his ear—her hands clasping his convulsively.

"No! the miserable wretch refuses to fight with me." She recoiled as she exclaimed—

"And did you expect that he would fight you? Did you look for manhood or manly courage at his hands?"

"Ay, but he *shall* meet me!" exclaimed Beauchampe, who perceived, in this short sentence, the true character of the duty which lay before him. "I will find him, at least, and you shall be avenged! He shall not escape me longer. His blood or mine."

"Stay! go not, Beauchampe! Risk nothing. Let me be the victim still. Your life is precious to me—more precious than my own name. Why should you forfeit station, pride, peace, safety—everything for me? Leave me, dear Beauchampe—leave me to my shame—leave me to despair!"

"Never! never! *You are* my life. Losing you I lose more than life—all that can make it precious! I will not lose you. Whatever happens, you are mine to the last."

"To the last, Beauchampe—thine—only thine—to the last—the last—the last!"

She sunk into his arms. He pressed his lips upon hers, and drawing the dirk from his bosom, he elevated it above her head, while he mentally renewed his oath of retribution. This done, he released her from his grasp, placed her in a seat, and, once more, pressing his lips to hers, he darted from the dwelling. In a few seconds more the sound of his horse's feet were heard, and she started from her seat, and from the stupor which seemed to possess her faculties. She hurried to the window. He had disappeared.

"He is gone!" she exclaimed, pressing her hand upon her forehead, "He is gone! gone for what? Ha! I have sent him. I have sent him on this bloody work. Oh! surely it is madness that moves me thus! It must be madness. Why should he murder Alfred Stevens? What good will come of it? What safety? What— But why should he not? Are we never to be free? Is he to thrust himself into our homes for ever—to baffle our hopes—destroy our peace—point his exulting finger to the hills of Charlemont, and cry aloud, 'Remember—there'? No! better he should die, and we should all die! Strike him, Beauchampe! Strike and fear nothing! Strike deep! Strike to the very heart—strike! strike! strike!"

Why should we look longer on this mournful spectacle. Yet the world will not willingly account this madness. It matters not greatly by what name you call a passion which has broken bounds, and disdains the right angles of convention. Let us leave the wife for the husband.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE AVENGER.

Was Beauchampe any more sane — we should phrase it otherwise — was he any less mad than his wife?

Perhaps he was more so. The simple inquiry which Mrs. Beauchampe had made, when he told her that Sharpe refused to fight him, had opened his eyes to all the terrible responsibility to which his unhappy oath had subjected him. When he had pledged himself to take the life of her betrayer, he had naturally concluded that this pledge implied nothing more than the resolution to meet with his enemy in the duel. That a Kentucky gentleman should shrink from such an issue did not for a moment enter his thoughts; and it is not improbable but that, if he could have conjectured this possibility, he had not so readily yielded to the condition which she had coupled with her consent to be his wife.

But, after this, when in his own house, and under the garb of friendship, Colonel Sharpe labored to repeat his crime, still less could he have believed it possible that the criminal would refuse the only mode of atonement, which, according to the practices of that society to which they both were accustomed, was left within his power to make. Had he apprehended this, he would have chosen the most direct mode of vengeance — such as the social sense everywhere would have justified — and put the offender to death upon the very hearth which he had striven to dishonor.

That he had not done so, was now his topic of self-reproach. An idea, whether true or false, of what was due to a guest, had compelled him to forbear, and to send the criminal forth, with every opportunity to prepare himself for the penalties which his offences had incurred.

Still, up to this moment, he had not contemplated the necessity of lifting his weapon except on equal terms, with the enemy whose life he sought. In fair fight he had no hesitation at this; but, as a murderer, to strike the undefended bosom—however criminal; however deserving of death—was a view of the case equally unexpected and painful. It was one for which his previous reflections had not prepared him; and, the excitement under which he labored in consequence, was one, that, if it did not madden him deprived him at least of all wholesome powers of reflection.

While he rode to Frankfort, he went as one in a cloud. He saw nothing to the right or the left. The farmer, his neighbor, spoke to him, but he only turned as if impatient at some interruption, but, without answering, put spurs again to the flanks of his horse, and darted off with a wilder speed than ever. An instinct, rather than a purpose, when he reached Frankfort, carried him to the lodgings of his friend Covington.

"And what do you mean to do?" demanded the latter.

"Kill him—there is nothing else to be done!"

"My dear Beauchampe—you must not think of such a thing."

"Ay, but I must: why should I not? Tell me that. Shall such a monster live?"

"There are good reasons why you should not kill him. If you do, unless in very fair fight, you will not only be tried, but found guilty of the murder."

"I know not that. His crime—"

"Deserves death and should have found it at the time! Had you put him to death when he was in your house, and

made the true cause known, the jury must have justified you; but you allowed the moment of provocation to pass."

"Such a moment can not pass."

"Ay, but it can and does! Time, they say, cools the blood!"

"Nonsense! When every additional moment of thought adds to the fever."

"They reason otherwise. Nay, more—just now that feeling of party runs too high. Already, they have trumpeted it about that Calvert sought to kill Sharpe on the score of his attachment to Desha. They made the grounds of that affair political, when, it seems to have been purely your own; and if you should attempt and succeed in such a thing, he would be considered a martyr to the party, and you would inevitably become its victim."

"Covington, do you think that I am discouraged by this? Do you suppose I fear death? No! If the gallows were already raised—if the executioner stood by—if I saw the felon-cart, and the gloating throng around, gathered to behold my agonies, I would still strike, strike fatally, and without fear!"

"I know you brave, Beauchampe; but such a death might well appal the bravest man!"

"It does not appal me. Understand me, Covington, I *must* slay this man!"

"I can not understand you, Beauchampe. As your friend I will not. I counsel you against the deed. I counsel you purely with regard to your own safety."

"As a friend, would you have me live dishonored?"

"No! I have already counselled you how to transfer the dishonor from your shoulders to his. Denounce him for his crime—disgrace him by the scourge!"

"No! no! Covington—this is no redress—no remedy. His blood only can wipe out *that* shame."

"I will have nothing to do with it, Beauchampe."

"Will you desert me?"

"Not if you adopt the usual mode. Take your horse-whip, arm yourself; give Sharpe notice to prepare; and it is not impossible, then, that he will be armed, and the rencontre may be as fatal as you could desire it. I am ready for you to this extent."

"Be it so, then! Believe me, Covington, I would rather a thousand times risk my own life than be compelled to take his without resistance. But understand one thing. He or I must perish! We can not both survive."

"I will strive to bring it about," said the other; and, urged by the impatience of Beauchampe, he proceeded, a second time, to give Colonel Sharpe the necessary notice.

But Sharpe was not to be found. He was denied at his own dwelling as in town; and Covington took the way to the house of his arch-vassal Mr. Barnabas. The latter gentleman confirmed the intelligence. He stated, not only that Sharpe had left town, but had proceeded to Bowling-Green.

Covington did not conceal his object. Knowing the character of Barnabas, and his relation to Sharpe, he addressed himself to the fears of both.

"Mr. Barnabas, it will be utterly impossible for Colonel Sharpe to avoid this affair. Beauchampe will force it upon him. He will degrade him daily in the streets of Frankfort: he will brand him with the whip in the sight of the people. You know the effect of this upon a man's character and position."

"Certainly, sir; but, Mr. Covington, Mr. Beauchampe will do so at his peril."

"To be sure—he knows that; but, with such wrongs as Mr. Beauchampe has had to sustain, he knows no peril He will certainly do what I tell you."

"But, Mr. Covington—my dear sir—can not this be avoided? Is there no other remedy? Will no apology—no atonement of Colonel Sharpe—suppose a written apol-

ogy—most humble and penitent—to Mr. and Mrs. Beauchampe—"

"Impossible! How could you think that such an apology could atone for such an offence?—first, the seduction of this lady, while yet unmarried; and, next, the abominable renewal of the attempt when she had become a wife!"

"But nobody believes this, Mr. Covington. It is generally understood that the first offence is the only one to be laid at Sharpe's door, and this is to be urged only on political grounds. Beauchampe supported Tompkins against Desha, and the friends of Tompkins revive this stale offence only to discredit Sharpe as the friend of the former."

"Mr. Barnabas, *you* know better. You *know* that Beauchampe was the friend of Sharpe, and spoke against Calvert in his defence. *We* also know, as well as you, that Calvert and Sharpe fought on account of this very lady; though Desha's friends have contrived to make it appear that the combat had a political origin."

"Well, Mr. Covington, *my* knowledge is one thing—that of the people another. I can only tell you that it is very generally believed that the true cause of the affair is political."

"And how has this general knowledge been obtained, Mr. Barnabas?" remarked Covington rather sternly. "As the friend of Beauchampe, and the only one to whom he has confided his feelings and wishes, I can answer for it that no publicity has been given to this affair by us."

"I don't know," said Barnabas, hurriedly, "how the report has got abroad. I only know that it is very general."

Mr. Covington rose to depart.

"Let me, before leaving you, Mr. Barnabas, advise you, as one of the nearest friends of Colonel Sharpe, what he is to expect. Mr. Beauchampe will *take the road* of him, and

will horsewhip him through the streets of Frankfort on the first occasion — nay, on every occasion — till he is prepared to fight him. I am free to add, for the benefit of any of Colonel Sharpe's friends, that I will accompany him whenever he proposes to make this attempt."

And, with this knightly intimation, Mr. Covington took his departure.

When Beauchampe heard that Sharpe had left town, and gone to Bowling-Green, he immediately jumped on his hors and went off in the same direction.

That very afternoon, Mr. Barnabas sat with his friend Colonel Sharpe over a bottle, and at the town-house of the latter! It had been a falsehood by which Beauchampe was sent on a wild-goose chase into the country. The object was to gain time, so as to enable the friends of both parties, or rather the friends of the criminal, who were members of the club, to interpose and effect an arrangement of the affair, if such a thing were possible; and, in the natural gratification which Sharpe felt that the danger was parried, though for a moment only, the spirits of the criminal rose into vivacity. The two made themselves merry with the unfruitful journey which the avenger was making; not considering the effect of such manœuvring upon a temper so excitable, nor allowing for the accumulation of those passions which, as they can not sleep, and can not be subdued, necessarily become more powerful in proportion to the delay in their utterance, and the restraints to which they are subjected.

Of course, Mr. Barnabas made a full report to his principal of all that Covington had told him. There was little in this report to please the offender; but there were other tidings which were more gratifying. The members of the club were busy to prevent the meeting. Mr. Barnabas had already sent a judicious and veteran politician to see Covington; and, having a great faith himself in the powers of the persons he had employed to bring the matter to a

peaceable adjustment, he had infused a certain portion of his own faith into the breast of his superior.

And the bowl went round merrily; and the hearts of the twain were lifted up, for, in their political transactions, there was much that had taken place of a character to give both of them positive gratification. And so the evening passed until about eight o'clock, when Mr. Barnabas sud denly recollected that he had made an appointment with some gentleman which required his immediate departure. Sharpe was unwilling to lose him, and his spirits sunk with the departure of his friend; nor were they much enlivened by the entrance of a lady, in whose meek, sad countenance might be read the history of an unloved, neglected, but uncomplaining wife. He did not look up at her approach. She placed herself in the seat which Mr. Barnabas had left.

"You look unwell, Warham. You seem to have been troubled, my husband," she remarked with some hesitation, and in a faint voice. "Is anything the matter?"

"Nothing which you can help, Mrs. Sharpe," he replied in cold and repelling accents, crossing his legs, and half wheeling his chair about so as to turn his back upon her. She was silenced, and looked at him with an eye full of a sad reproach and a lasting disappointment. No further words passed between them, and a few moments only elapsed when a rap was heard at the outer entrance.

"Leave the room," he said; "I suppose it is Barnabas returned. I have private business with him. You had better go to bed."

She rose meekly, and did as she was commanded. He also rose, and went to the door.

"Who's that—Barnabas?" he demanded, while opening the door.

He was answered indistinctly; but he fancied that the words were in the affirmative, and the visiter darted in the moment the door was opened. The passage-way being dark, he could not distinguish the person of the stranger.

except to discover that it was not the man whom he expected. But this discovery was made almost in the very instant when the intruder entered, and with it came certain apprehensions of danger, which, however vague, yet startled and distressed him. Under their influence he receded from the entrance, moving backward with his face to the stranger, till he re-entered the sitting-apartment. The moment that the light fell upon the face of the visiter, his knees knocked against one another. It was Beauchampe.

"Beauchampe!" he involuntarily exclaimed, with a hollow voice, while his dilated eyes regarded the fierce, wild aspect of the visiter.

"Ay, Beauchampe!" were the echoed tones of the other —tones almost stifled in the deep intensity of mood with which they were spoken—tones low, but deep, like those of some dull convent-bell, echoing at midnight along the gray rocks and heights of some half-deserted land! As deep and soul-thrilling as would be such sounds upon the ear of some wanderer, unconscious of any neighborhood, did they fall upon the sudden sense of that criminal. His courage instantly failed him. His knees smote each other; his tongue clove to his mouth; he had strength enough only to recede as if with the instinct of flight. Beauchampe caught his arm.

"You can not fly—you must stay! My business will suffer no further postponement."

Beauchampe forced him into a chair.

"What is the matter, Beauchampe? what do you mean to do?" gasped the trembling criminal.

"Does not your guilty soul tell you what I *should* do?" was the stern demand.

"I *am* guilty!" was the half-choking answer.

"Ay! but the confession alone will avail nothing. You must atone for your guilt!"

"On my knees, Beauchampe?"

"No!—with your blood!"

"Spare me, Beauchampe! oh! spare my life. Do not murder me—for I can not fight you on account of that injured woman!"

"This whining will not answer, Colonel Sharpe. You must fight me. I have brought weapons for both. Choose!"

The speaker threw two dirks upon the floor at the feet of the criminal, while he stood back proudly.

"Choose!" he repeated, pointing to the weapons.

But the latter, though rising, so far from availing himself of the privilege, made an effort to pass his enemy and escape from the room. But the prompt arm of Beauchampe arrested him and threw him back with some force toward the corner of the apartment.

"Colonel Sharpe, you can not escape me. The falsehood of your friend, which sent me from the city, has resolved me to suffer no more delay of justice. Will you fight me? Choose of the weapons at your feet."

"I can not! spare me, Beauchampe—my dear friend—for the past—in consideration of what we have been to each other—spare my life!"

"You thought not of this, villain, when, in the insolence of your heart, you dared to bring your lust into my dwelling."

"Beauchampe, hear me for your own sake, hear me."

"Speak! speak briefly. I am in no mood to trifle."

"My crime was that of a young man—"

"Stay! your crime was the invasion of my family—of its peace."

"Ah!—that *was* a crime—if it were so."

"What, do you mean to deny? Dare you to impute falsehood to my wife?"

"Beauchampe, she is your wife; and for this reason, I will not say, what I might say, but—"

"Oh! speak all—speak all! I am curious to see by what new invention of villany you hope to deceive me."

"No villany—no invention, Beauchampe—I speak only

the solemn truth. Before God, I assure you it is the truth only which I will deliver."

"You swear?"

"Solemnly."

"Speak, then—but take up the dirk."

"No! If you will but hear me, I do not fear to convince you that there needs none either in your hands or mine."

"You are a good lawyer, keen, quick-witted, and very logical; but it will task better wits than yours to alter my faith that you are a villain, and that you shall perish by this hand of mine."

Beauchampe stooped and possessed himself of one of the weapons.

"Speak now! what have you to say? Remember Colonel Sharpe, you have not only summoned God to witness your truth, but you may be summoned in a few moments to his presence to answer for your falsehood. I am sent here, solemnly sworn, to take your life!"

"But only because you believed me a criminal in respects in which I am innocent. If I show you that I never approached Mrs. Beauchampe, while your wife, except with the respect due to herself and you—"

"Liar! but you can not show me *that!* I tell you, I believe what she has told me. I know her truth and your falsehood."

"She is prejudiced, my dear friend. She hates me—"

"And with good reason: but hate you as she may, she speaks, and can speak, nothing in your disparagement but the truth."

"She has misunderstood—mistaken me, in what I said."

"Stay!" approaching him. "Stay! do not deceive yourself, Colonel Sharpe: you can not deceive me. She has detailed the whole of your wild overtures—the very words of shame and guilt, and villanous baseness which you employed."

"Beauchampe, my dear friend, are you sure that she *has* told you all?"

Here the criminal approached with extended hand, while he assumed a look of mysterious meaning, which left something for the other to anticipate.

"Sure that she told me all? Ay! I *am* sure! What remains? Speak out, and leave nothing to these smooth, cunning faces. Speak out, while the time is left you."

"Did she tell you of our first meeting in Charlemont?"

"Ay, did she—*that!* everything!"

"I seek not to excuse my crime, *there*, Beauchampe—but that was not a crime against *you!* I did not know you then. I did not then fancy that you would ever be so allied to—"

"Cease that, and say what you deem needful."

"Did she tell you of the child?"

"Child! what child?" demanded Beauchampe, with a start of surprise.

The face of Sharpe put on a look of exultation. He felt that he had gained a point.

"Ah! ha! I could have sworn that she did not tell you *all!*"

The eyes of Beauchampe glared more fiercely, and the convulsive twitching of the hand which held the dagger, and the quivering of his lip, might have warned his companion of the danger which he incurred of trifling with him longer.

But Sharpe's policy was to induce the suspicions of Beauchampe in relation to his wife. He fancied, from the unqualified astonishment which appeared in the latter's face, as he spoke of the child, that he had secured a large foothold in this respect, for it was very clear that Mrs. Beauchampe, while relating everything of any substantial importance which concerned herself, had evidently omitted that portion of the narrative which concerned the unhappy and short-lived offspring of her guilty error.

It does not need to inquire why she had forborne to include this particular in her statement to her husband. There may have been some superior pang in the recollection of that gloomy period which had followed her fall; and it was not necessary to the frank confession which she had freely offered of her guilt.

But, though unimportant, Colonel Sharpe very well knew, that there is a danger in the suppression of any fact, in a case like this, where the relations are so nice and sensitive, which is like to involve an appearance of guilt, and to lead to its presumption. Like an experienced practitioner at the sessions, he deemed it important to dwell upon this particular.

"I could have sworn!" he repeated, "that she had not told you of that child. "Ah! my dear friend, spare me the necessity of telling you what she has forborne. She is now your wife. Her reputation is yours—her shame would be yours also. Believe me, I repent of all I have done—for your sake, for hers—believe me, moreover, when I assure you that she mistook my language, when she fancied that I meant indignity in what I said lately in your house."

"But *I* could not mistake that, Colonel Sharpe."

"No! but did you hear it rightly reported?"

"Ay! she would not deceive me. You labor in vain. This dirty work is easy with you; but it does not blind me! Colonel Sharpe, what child is this that you speak of?"

"Her child, to be sure!"

"Her child! Had she a child?"

"To be sure she had. Ask her: she will not deny it, perhaps, and if she does, I can prove it."

"Her child!—and yours?"

"No—no! No child of mine!"

"Ha! not your child! Whose—whose then?"

"Go to her, my dear friend! Ask her of that child."

"Where is the child?"

"Dead!"

"Dead! well! what of it then?"

"Go to her—ask *her* whose it was? Ah! my dear Beauchampe, let *me* say no more. Press me no further to speak. She is *your* wife!"

The eye of Beauchampe settled upon him with a suddenly-composed but stony expression.

"Say *all!*" he said deliberately. "Disburthen yourself of all! I request it particularly, Colonel Sharpe—nay, I command it."

"My dear friend, Beauchampe, I really would prefer not—ah! it is an ugly business."

"Do not trifle, Colonel Sharpe—speak—you do not help your purpose by this prevarication. What do you know further of this child? It was not yours, you say—whose was it then?"

"It was not mine! and to say whose it was is scarce so easy a matter, but—" and he drew nigh and whispered the rest of the sentence, some three syllables, into the ears of the husband.

The latter recoiled. His face grew black, his hand grasped the dagger with nervous rigidity, and, while the look of cunning confidence mantled the face of the criminal, and before he could recede from the fatal proximity to which, in whispering, he had brought himself with the avenger, the latter had struck. The sharp edge of the dagger had answered the shocking secret—whatever might have been its character—and the terrible oath of the husband was redeemed!—redeemed in a single moment, and by a single blow.

The wrongs of Margaret Cooper were at last avenged!

But were her sorrows ended?

How should they be? The hand that is stained with human blood, in whatever cause—the soul that has prompted the deed of blood—what waters shall make clean?

"Vengeance is mine!" saith the Lord—meaning "mine only!" Wo, then, for the guilty soul that usurps this sublime privilege of Deity! It must bide a dreary destiny before the waters of heavenly mercy shall flow to cleanse and sweeten it. We may plead the madness of the criminals, and this alone may excuse what we are not permitted to justify. Certainly, they had been stung to madness. The very genius of Margaret Cooper made the transition to madness easy!

But—Colonel Sharpe fell, prone on his face, at the feet of the avenger!

A single blow had slain him!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HUE AND CRY.

"Now that we have the food we so have longed for,
Let us talk cheerily! We'll think of pleasures
That never shall grow surfeit—of joys of Death,
Whose reign wraps earth in its eternal grasp,
And feeds eternity! Oh, we'll be joyful now!"—*Old Play.*

A MURDER in a novel, though of very common occurrence, is usually a matter of a thousand very thrilling minutiæ. In the hands of a score of our modern romancers, it is surprising what capital they make of it! How it runs through a score of chapters!—admits of a variety of details, descriptions, commentaries, and conjectures! Take any of the great *raconteurs* of the European world—not forgetting Dumas and Reynolds—and see what they will do with it! How they turn it over, and twist it about, as a sweet morsel under the tongue! In either of these hands, it becomes one of the most prolific sources of interest; which does not end with the knife or bludgeon stroke, or bullet-shot, but multiplies its relations the more it is conned, and will swallow up half the pages of an ordinary duodecimo. As they unfold the long train of consequences, in interminable recital, you are confounded at the dilating atmosphere of the deed; at the long accumulation of dreary details; fact upon fact—whether of moment or value to the progress, or not, is not necessary to be asked here—which grows out of the crime on every hand. How it spreads, as the radiating circles in the water, from a pebble plunged

nto the lake. There you see the good old butler or porter of the household, or it may be the cook or hostler—Saunders Maybin, or Richard Swopp, by name—going forth at dawn, having been troubled during the night with sundry uneasinesses, the consequence of a hearty supper of lobster or salt cod, and suddenly encountering a blood-spot upon the sward!

That mysterious blood-spot!—

At the sight of it, the said Saunders or Richard recoils, puts his finger to his nose dubitatingly, shakes his noddle significantly, and mutters—quoting Shakspere without a consciousness: "This is miching malico! It means mischief!"

And, so saying, he goes on nosing—all nose from that moment—till he finds more *sign*, in the parlance of the Indian, and is at length conducted, step by step, till he stumbles over the lopped members of a human carcass jutting out from a dunghill!

Nay, it may not be so easily found—may require some circuitous turns of the nose before full discovery; and then it may not be in a dunghill that it is hidden. It may be in the bushes or in the sands; but no matter where: you shall be a whole summer day in making the discovery, for our authors will not suffer you to lose a single detail in the progress; and, by the time the search is ended, it is to be hoped that you will believe that your author as well as conductor has a valuable nose!

But, whatever the particulars of search and discovery, you must have 'em all; you will be bated not a hair, not an item, not an atom: how many are the drops of blood; how large the puddle; whether first seen on grass or sand; how the body lies when found; what the shape and size of the wound; whether by a sharp or rusty blade, smooth shillelah or knotted hickory: there must be a regular inventory! Such is equally crowner's quest and novelist's law!

And the "crowner's quest" itself—*that* is always an

inquisition of rare susceptibilities, and nice details and discriminations; amplifications of the old case of Ophelia, as to whether the woman went to the water, or the water went to the woman! The differences of vulgar opinion; the array of vulgar prejudices; the free use of legal technicalities; and a thousand other abominable little niceties, that ought to be gathered up at a grasp, all spread out to the utmost stretch — like the shirt of Cæsar — scored with bloody gashes, each having name and number! To crown all, and to render the "miching malico" more endurable and desirable, you are always sure to have some poor devil of an innocent in the way — just where he ought not to be — looking very much like the guilty one, and behaving with such pains-taking stupidity, that nobody doubts that he is; and he is accordingly laid by the heels, and clapped up in prison, to answer to the crime. The genius of the novelist then goes to work, in right good earnest, to see how he can be got out of the darbies! This is the notable way to relate such a history usually; and one might think it a tolerably good way, indeed, were it not that most people find it abominably tedious.

Having seen, for ourselves, how Sharpe was murdered, who was the murderer, and how the blow was struck, we shall not fatigue the reader in showing how many versions of the affair got abroad among those who were, of course, more and more positive in their conjectures in proportion to the small knowledge which they possessed. We make short a story which, long enough already, we apprehend, might, by an ingenious romancer, be made a great deal longer.

Suspicion fell instantly on Beauchampe. On whom else should it fall? He had announced his purpose to take the life of the criminal; and, wherever Sharpe's offence had got abroad, people expected that he would commit the deed.

In our country, a great many crimes are committed to gratify public expectation. Most of our duels are fought

to satisfy the demands of public opinion; by which is understood the opinions of that little set, batch, or clique, of which some long-nosed Solomon—some addle-pated leader of a score whose brains are thrice addled—is the sapient lawgiver and head. Most of the riots and mobs are instigated by half-witted journalists, who first goad the offender to his crime, and, the next day, rate him soundly for its commission! He who, in a fit of safe valor, the day before, taunted his neighbor with cowardice for submitting to an indignity, lifts up his holy hands with horror when he hears that the nose-pulling is avenged, and, as a conscientious juryman, hurries the wretch to the halter who has only followed his own suggestions in braining the assailant with his bludgeon! All this is certainly very amusing, and, with proper details, makes a murder-paragraph in the newspaper which delights the old ladies to as great an extent as a marriage does the young ones. It produces that pleasurable excitement which is the mental brandy and tobacco to all persons of the Anglo-Saxon breed—for both of which the appetite is tolerably equal in both Great Britain and America.

In the case of Beauchampe, the "Hue and Cry" knew, by a sort of conventional instinct, exactly in what quarter to turn its sagacious nostrils.

"It is Beauchampe that has done this!" was the common voice, as soon as the deed was known. And, by-the-way, when public expectation so certainly points to the true offender, it is highly probable that it gave the clue to the offence in the first instance. It said: "Do it!—it ought to be done!"

Beauchampe did not much concern himself about the "Hue and Cry," or even about that great authority "Public Opinion." He returned to his own dwelling; but not with the feet of fear—not even with those of flight. His journey homeward was marked with the deliberation of one who feels satisfied that he has performed a duty, the neglect

of which had long been burdensome and painful to his conscience.

It is, of course, to be understood that he was laboring under a degree of excitement which makes it something like an absurdity to talk of conscience at all. The fanaticism which now governed his feelings, and had sprung from them, possessed his mind also. With the air of one who has gone through a solemn and severe ordeal, with the feeling of a martyr, he presented himself before his wife.

The deliberation of monomania is one of its most remarkable features. It is singularly exemplified by one portion of Beauchampe's proceedings. On leaving her to seek the interview with Sharpe, he had informed her, not only on what day, but at what hour, to look for his return; and he reached his dwelling within fifteen minutes of the appointed moment.

Anxiously expecting his arrival, she had walked down the grove to meet him. On seeing her, he raised his handkerchief, red with the bloody proofs of his crime, and waved it in the manner of a flag. She ran to meet him, and, as he leaped from his horse, she fell prostrate on her face before him. Her whole frame was convulsed, and she burst into a flood of tears.

"Why weep, why tremble?" he exclaimed. "Do you weep that the deed is done—the shame washed out in the blood of the criminal—that you are avenged at last?"

His accents were stern and reproachful. She lifted her hands and eyes to heaven as she replied:—

"No! not for this I weep and tremble; or, if for this, it is in gratitude to Heaven that has smiled upon the deed."

But, though she spoke this fearful language, she spoke not the true feeling of her soul. We have already striven to show that she no longer possessed those feelings which would have desired the performance of the deed. She no longer implored revenge. She strove to reject the memory of the murdered man, as well as of the wanton crime by

which he had provoked his fate; and the emotion which she expressed, when she beheld the bloody signal waving from her husband's hands, had its birth in the revolting of that feminine nature which, even in her, after the long contemplation which had made her imagination familiar with the crime, was still in the ascendant. But this she concealed. This she denied, as we have seen. Her motive was a noble one. It is soon expressed:—

"He has done the deed for me—in my behalf! Shall I now refuse approbation? shall I withhold my sympathy? No! let his guilt be what it may, he is mine, and I am his, for ever!"

And, with this resolve, she smiled upon the murderer, kissed his bloody hands, and lifted her own to Heaven in seeming gratitude for its sanction of the crime.

But a new feeling was added to those which, however conflicting, her words and looks had just expressed. She rose from the ground in apprehension.

"But are you safe, my husband?" she demanded.

"What matters it?" he replied. "Has he not fallen beneath my arm?"

"Yes; but if you are not safe!—"

"I know not what degree of safety I need," was his reply. "I have thought but little of that. If you mean, however, to ask whether I am suspected or not, I tell you I believe I am. Nay, more—I think the pursuers are after me. They will probably be here this very night. But what of this, dear wife? I have no fears. My heart is light. I am really happy—never more so—since the deed is done. I could laugh, dance, sing—practise any mirth or madness—just as one, who has been relieved of his pain, throws by his crutch, and feels his limbs and strength free at last, after a bondage to disease for years."

And he caught her in his arms as he spoke, and his eye danced with a strange fire, which made the woman shudder to behold it. A cold tremor passed through her veins.

"Are you not happy too?—do you not share with me this joy?" he demanded.

"Oh, yes, to be sure I do!" she replied, with a husky apprehension in her voice, which, however, he did not seem to observe.

"I knew it—I knew you would be! Such a relief, ending in a triumph, should make us both so happy! I never was more joyful, my dear wife. Never! never!"—and he laughed—laughed until the woods resounded—and did not heed the paleness of her cheek; did not feel the faltering of her limbs as he clasped her to his breast; did not note the wildness in her eye as she looked stealthily backward on the path over which he came.

She, at least, was now fully in her senses, whatever she may have been before. She stopped him in his antics. She drew him suddenly aside, into the cover of the grove—for, by this time, they had come in sight of the dwelling—and, throwing herself on her knees, clasped his in her arms, while she implored his instant flight.

But he flatly refused, and she strove in vain, however earnestly, to change his determination. All that she could obtain from him was, a promise to keep silent, and not, by any act of his own, to facilitate the progress of those who might seek to discover the proofs of his criminality. Crime, indeed, he had long ceased to consider his performance. The change, in this respect, which had taken place in her feelings and opinions, had produced none in his. His mind had been wrought up to something like a religious frenzy. He regarded the action, not only as something due to justice—an action appointed for himself particularly—but as absolutely and intrinsically glorious.

Perhaps, indeed, such an act as his should always be estimated with reference to the sort of world in which the performer lives. What were those brave deeds of the middle ages—the avenging of the oppressed, the widow, and the orphan—by which stalwart chiefs made themselves

famous? Crimes, too, and sometimes of the blackest sort, but that they had their value as benefits at a period when society afforded no redress for injury, and consequently no protection for innocence.

And what protection did society afford to Margaret Cooper, and what redress for injury? Talk of your action for damages—your five thousand dollars—and of what avail to such a woman, robbed of innocence; mocked, persecuted; followed to the last refuge of her life, the home of her mother and her husband: and, afterward, thrice-blackened in fame by the wanton criminal, by slanders of the most shocking invention!

Society never yet could succeed in protecting and redressing all its constituents, or any one of them, in all his or her relations. There are a thousand respects where the neighbors must step in; where, to await for law, or to hope for law, is to leave the feeble and the innocent to perish. You hear the cry of "Murder!" Do you stop, and resume your seat, with the comforting reflection that, if John murders Peter, John, after certain processes of evidence, will be sent to the stateprison or the gallows, and make a goodly show, on some gloomy Friday, for the curious of both sexes? Law is a very good thing in its way, but it is not everything; and there are some honest impulses, in every manly bosom, which are the best of all moral laws, as they are the most certainly *human* of all laws. Give us, say I, Kentucky practice, like that of Beauchampe, as a social law, rather than that which prevails in some of our pattern cities, where women are, in three fourths the number of instances, the victims—violated, mangled, murdered—where men are the criminals—and where (Heaven kindly having withdrawn the sense of shame) there is no one guilty—at least none brave enough or manly enough to bring the guilty to punishment! What is said is not meant to defend or encourage the shedding of blood. We may not defend the taking of life, even by the laws. We regard life as an

express trust from Heaven, of which, as we should not divest ourselves, no act but that of Heaven should divest us: but there is a crime beyond it, in the shedding of that vital soul-blood, its heart of hearts, life of all life, the fair fame, the untainted reputation; and the one offence which provokes the other should be placed in the opposing balance, as an offset, in some degree. to the crime by which it is avenged.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE DUNGEON.

We could tell a long story about the manner in which Beauchampe was captured; but it will suffice to say that when the pursuers presented themselves at his threshold, he was ready, and with the high, confident spirit of one assured that all was right in his own own bosom, he yielded himself up at their summons, and attended them to Frankfort.

Behold him, then, in prison. The cold, gloomy walls are around him, and all is changed, of the sweet, social outer world, in the aspects which meet his eye.

But the woman of his heart is there with him; and if the thing that we love is left us, the dungeon has its sunshine, and the prison is still a home. The presence of the loved one hallows it into home. Amidst doubt, and privation—the restraint he endures, and the penal doom which he may yet have to suffer—her affection rises always above his affliction, and baffles the ills that would annoy, and soothes the restraint which is unavoidable. She has a consolation such as woman alone knows to administer, for the despondency that weighs upon him. She can soothe the dark hours with her song, and the weary ones with her caress and smile.

But not to ordinary appeals like these does the wife of *his* bosom confine her ministry. Her soul rises in strength corresponding to the demands of his. Ardent in his nature,

little used to restraint, the circumscribed boundary of his prison grows irksome, at moments, beyond his temper to endure. At such moments his heart fails him, and doubts arise—shadows of the solemn truth which always haunt the soul of the wrong-doer, however righteous to his diseased mind may seem his deeds at the moment of their performance—doubts that distress him with the fear that he may still have erred.

To the pure heart—to the conscientious spirit—there is nothing more distressing than such a doubt; and this very distress is the remorse which religion loves to inspire, when it would promote the workings of repentance. It is a misplaced and mistaken kindness that the wife of Beauchampe undertakes to fortify his faith, and strengthen him in the conviction that all is right. We can not blame her, though pity 'tis 'twas so. She no longer speaks—perhaps she no longer thinks—of the deed which he has done, as an event either to be deplored, or to have been avoided. She speaks of it as a necessary misfortune. As she found that he derived his chief consolation from the conviction that the deed was laudable, she toils, with deliberate ingenuity and industry, to confirm his impressions. Through the sad, slow-pacing moments of the midnight, she sits beside him and renews the long and cruel story of her wrong. She suppresses nothing *now*. That portion of the narrative relating to the child, from her previous suppression of which, the unhappy man whom he had slain, had striven to originate certain doubts of her conduct, and to infuse them into the mind of Beauchampe—was all freely told, and its previous suppression explained and accounted for. The wife seemed to take a singular and sad pleasure in reiterating this painful narrative; and yet, every repetition of the tale brought to her spirit the pang, as keenly felt as ever, of her early humiliation. But she saw that the renewal of the story strengthened the feeling of self-justification in the mind of her husband! That was the rock upon which he stood, and

to confirm the solidity of that support, was to lighten the restraints of his prison, and all the terrors which might be inspired by the apprehension of his doom. Of the mere stroke of death, he had no fears; but there is something in the idea of a felon death by the halter, which distresses and subjugates the strongest nerves. This idea sometimes came to afflict the prisoner, but the keen instincts of his wife enabled her very soon to discover the causes of his depression, and her quick, commanding intellect provided her with the arguments which were to combat them.

"Do not fear, my husband," she would say. "I know that they must acquit you. No jury of men—men who have wives, and daughters, and sisters, but must not only acquit you of crime, but must justify and applaud you for the performance of a deed which protects their innocence, and strikes terror into the heart of the seducer. You have not been my champion merely, you are the champion of my sex. The blow which your arm has struck, was a blow in behalf of every unprotected female, of every poor orphan—fatherless, brotherless, and undefended—who otherwise would be the prey of the ruffian and the betrayer. No, no! There can be no cause of fear. I do not fear for you. I will myself go into the court, and, if need be, plead your cause by telling the whole story of my wrong. They shall hear me. I will neither fear nor blush—and they shall believe me when they hear."

But to this course the husband objected. The heart of a man is more keenly alive to the declared shame of one he truly loves, than to the loss of life or of any other great sacrifice which the social man can make. Besides, Beauchampe knew better than his wife what would be permitted, and what denied, in the business of a court of justice. Still, it was necessary that steps should be taken for his defence. At first, he proposed to argue his own case; but he was very soon conscious, after a few moments given to reflection on this subject, that his feelings would enter too largely

into his mind to suffer it to do him or itself justice. While undetermined what course to pursue, or who to employ, his friend Covington suggested the name of Calvert, as that of a lawyer likely to do him more justice by far than any other that he could name.

"I know Colonel Calvert," said the young man, "and I can assure you he has no superior as a jury pleader in the country. He is very popular—makes friends wherever he goes, and is beginning to be accounted, everywhere, the only man who could have taken the field against Sharpe."

"But what was it that you told me of his fighting with Sharpe on my account!" was the inquiry of Beauchampe, now urged with a degree of curiosity which he had neither shown nor felt, when the fact was first mentioned to him.

"Of that I can tell you little. It is very well known that Sharpe and Calvert quarrelled and fought, almost at their first meeting. The friends of Sharpe asserted that the quarrel arose on account of offensive words which Calvert made use of in disparagement of Desha."

"Yes, I heard *that*—now I remember—from Barnabas himself."

"Such was the story; but Sharpe assured me that the affair really took place on account of Mrs. Beauchampe."

"Mrs. Beauchampe!" exclaimed the husband.

The wife, who was present, looked up inquiringly, but said nothing. Mr. Covington looked to the lady and remained silent, while, with a face suddenly flushed, Beauchampe motioned to his wife to leave them. When she had done so, Covington repeated what had been said by Sharpe concerning his duel with Calvert.

"It was only some lie of his, intended to help his evasion. It was to secure the temporary object. I never heard of Calvert from my wife."

Such was Beauchampe's opinion. But Covington thought otherwise.

"A rumor has reached me since," he added, "which

leads me to think that the story is not altogether without foundation. At all events, whether there be anything in it or not, Calvert will be your man for the defence. If anything is to be done, he will do it. But really, Beauchampe, if you have stated all the particulars, they can establish nothing against you."

"Ah! the general persuasion that I ought to kill Sharpe, will produce testimony enough. I think I shall escape, Covington, but it will be in spite of the testimony. I will escape, because of the sentiment of justice, which, in the breast of every honest man, will say, that Sharpe ought to die, and that no hand had a better right to take his life than mine. But you know the faction. They are strong—his friends and relatives are numerous. They will strain every nerve—spare no money, and suborn testimony enough to effect their object. They will fail, I think: I can scarcely say I hope, for, of a truth, my dear fellow, it seems to me that I have done the great act of my life. I feel as if I had performed the crowning achievement. I could do nothing more meritorious if I lived a thousand years; and death, therefore, would not be to me *now* such a misfortune as I should have regarded it a month ago. Still, life has something for me. I should like to live. The thought of losing *her*, is a worse pang than any that the mere loss of life could inflict."

The prisoner was touched as he said these words. A big tear gathered in his eye, and he averted his face from his companion. Covington rose to depart. As he did so he asked:—

"Shall I see Calvert for you, Beauchampe?"

"I will think of it, and let you know to-morrow," was the reply.

"The sooner the better. Your enemies are busy, and Calvert lives at some distance. He must be written to, and time may be lost, as he may be on the road now somewhere. I will look in upon you in the morning."

"Do so. I shall then be better able to say what should be done. I will think of it to-night: but, of a truth, Covington, I do not feel disposed to do anything. I prefer to remain inactive. For what should I say? Speak out? That would be against all legal notions of making a defence. And yet, I know no mode properly of defending myself, than by declaring the act my own, and justifying it as such. To myself—to my own soul—it is thus justified. God!—if it were not! But, in order to make this justification felt by the jury, they must know my secret. They must hear all that damning tale of *her* trial and overthrow, and the serpent-like progress of him whose head I have bruised for ever! How can I tell *that*? That is impossible!"

Covington agreed with the speaker, who proceeded thus:

"Well, then, I am silent. The general issue is one of form, pleading which I am not supposed to be guilty of any violation of the laws of morals—though what an absurdity is that!—I plead it, and keep silent. The *onus probandi* lies with the state—"

"And it can prove nothing, if your statement be correct."

"*Non sequitur*, my good fellow. My statement *is* correct. Nobody saw me commit the deed. The clothes which I wore are sunk to the bottom of the Kentucky river; the dirk is buried; and I know that, with the exception of the great Omniscient, my proceedings were hidden from the eyes of all. But it does not follow from this that there will be no evidence against me. I suspect there will be witnesses enough. The friends and family of Sharpe will suborn witnesses. There are hundreds of people, too, who readily believe what they fancy; and conjecture will make details fast enough, which the vanity of seeming to know will prompt the garrulous to deliver. I am convinced that vanity makes a great many witnesses, who will lie for the sake of having something to say, and will swear to the lie for the sake of having an audience who are compelled to

listen to them. With a little management, you can get anything sworn to. You have heard of the philosopher who, under a bet, with some previous arrangement, collected a crowd in the street to see certain stars at noonday, which soon became visible to as many as looked. Some few did not see so many stars as others, nor did they seem to these so bright as to the rest; but all of them saw the stars — they were there — that was enough; and some of your big-mouthed observers booked a few incipient moons or comets, and, of course, were more conspicuous themselves in consequence of their conspicuous sight-seeing. If I have any fear at all, it will be from some such quarter. The friends of Sharpe have already turned upon me as the criminal, and other eyes will follow theirs. Those who know the crime of Sharpe, will conclude that the deed is mine, from a conviction which all have felt that it should be mine; and, not to look to the political manœuvrers for interference, I make no question but they will find the very dagger with which the deed was done — perhaps half-a-dozen daggers — each of which will have its believer, and each believer will be possessed of as many leading circumstances to identify the murderer."

"I believe that they will try to convict you, Beauchampe, but I can not think, with you, that witnesses are so easy to be found."

"We shall see — we shall see."

"At all events, a good lawyer, who will probe such witnesses to the quick, will be the best security against their frauds, whether these arise from vanity or malevolence; and I can not too earnestly recommend you to let me see or write to Calvert."

"On that point I will give you my answer hereafter," said Beauchampe evasively.

"In the morning," suggested the other.

"Ay, perhaps so: at least, Covington, let me see you then."

The other promised, and, taking a kind farewell, depart-

ed. When he had gone, the wife of Beauchampe reappeared, and, with some earnestness of manner, he directed her to sit beside him upon his pallet.

"Anna," said he, "you never told me anything of a Mr. Calvert. Do you know any such person, and how are you interested in him?"

"I know but one person of the name—an old gentleman who taught school at Charlemont. But I have neither seen nor heard of him for years."

"An old gentleman! How old?"

"Perhaps sixty or sixty-five."

"Not the same! But, perhaps, he had a son? Now, I remember, that, when I went to Bowling-Green, there was an old gentleman, with a very white head, who seemed intimate with Colonel Calvert."

"He had no son—none, at least, that I ever saw."

"It is strange!"

"What is strange, Beauchampe?" she asked.

He then told her all that he had learned from Covington. She concurred with him that it was strange, if true; but declared her belief that the story was an invention of Sharpe, by which he hoped to effect some object which he might fancy favorable to his safety.

"But, at all events, husband, employ this Colonel Calvert, of whom Mr. Covington and the public seem to think so highly. You have spoken very highly of him yourself."

"Yes," was the reply; "but somehow, Anna, I am loath to do anything in my defence. I hate to seek evasion from the dangers of an act which I performed deliberately, and would again perform, were it again necessary."

"But this is a strange prejudice, surely, Beauchampe. Why should you not defend yourself?"

"I would, my wife, if defence, in this case, implied justification."

"And does it not?" demanded the wife anxiously.

"No, nothing like it. It implies evasion—the suppres-

sion of the truth, if not the suggestion of the falsehood. You are no lawyer, Anna. The truth would condemn me."

"What! the *whole* truth!"

"No—perhaps not; but it would be difficult to get the *whole* truth before a jury: and, even if this could be done, *could I* do it?"

"And why not, my husband?" she demanded earnestly, approaching him at the same moment, and laying her hand impressively upon his shoulder, while her eyes were fixed upon his own—

"And why not? The day of shame—shame from this cause—has gone by from us. We are either above or below the world. At least, we depend not for the heart's sustenance upon it. Suppose it scorns and reviles us—suppose it points to me as the miserable victim of that viperous lust which crawled into our valleys with a glozing tongue—I, that know how little I was the slave of that foul passion, in my own breast, will not madden, more than I have done, at its contumelious judgment. They can not call me harlot. No, Beauchampe! I fell; I was trampled in the dust of shame; I was guilty of weakness, and vanity, and wilfulness; but, believe me, if ever spirit felt the remorse and the ignominy which belong to virtuous repentance of error, that spirit was mine!"

"I know it—do I not know it, dearest?" he said, tenderly taking her in his arms.

"I believe you know and feel it; and this conviction, Beauchampe, strengthens me against the world. In your judgment I fixed my proper safety for the future. Let the world know all—the whole truth—if that will anything avail for your justification. Let them speak of me hereafter as they please. Secure in myself—secure from the self-reproach of having fallen a victim to the harlot-appetite (though the victim to my own miserable vanity and folly)—doubly secure in your conviction of the truth of what I say, and am—I can smile at all that follows: I can

do more, Beauchampe—endure it with patience and fortitude, and without distressing you or myself with the language of complaint. Do not, therefore, dear Beauchampe, refuse the justification which the truth may bring, through any wish to save me from the further exposure. Hear me, when I assure you, solemnly, in this solemn midnight—with no eye upon us in this cold, gloomy dungeon, but that of Heaven—hear me solemnly affirm that though you should resolve to spare me, I will not spare myself. If need be, I will go into the courthouse—before the assembled judges, before the people—and with my own tongue declare the story of my shame. Base should I be, indeed, if, to save these cheeks from the scarlet which would follow such a recital, I could see them hale you to the ignominious gallows!"

"And sooner would I die a thousand deaths on that gallows, than suffer you to do yourself such cruel wrong!"

Such was the answer spoken with effort, with husky accents, which the criminal made to the strong-minded woman, whose high-souled, and seemingly unnatural resolution—however opposed to his—yet touched him really as a proof of the most genuine devotion. He did not say more; he did not offer to dispute a resolution which he well knew he could not overthrow; but he determined, inly, to practise some becoming artifice, to deprive her, when the crisis of his fate was at hand, of any opportunity of meddling in its progress.

Thus the night waned—the long, dark night, in that gloomy dungeon. Not altogether gloomy! Devotion makes light in the dark places. Love cheers the solitude with its own pure star-lighted countenance. Sincerity wins us from the contemplation of the darkness; and with the sweet word of the truthful comforter in our ear, the fever subsides from the throbbing temples, and the downcast heart is lifted into hope. That night, and every night, she shared with him his dungeon!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DIFFERENT PHILOSOPHIES OF LOVE.

The arguments of Covington, to persuade Beauchampe to employ the services of Calvert, were unavailing. He, at length, gave it up in despair. The very suggestion which Sharpe had made, that Calvert had some knowledge already of the wife's character, and that the duel between himself and Calvert had originated in the knowledge of his wrong to her—however curious it made Beauchampe to learn what relation the latter could have had to his wife—was also a cause, why, in the general soreness of his feelings on this subject, he should studiously avoid the professional assistance of the other. The wife, when Covington took his departure, renewed the attempt. The arguments of the latter had been more imposing to her mind than they were to that of the husband; but, repeated by her, they did not prove a jot more successful that when urged by Covington. To these she added suggestions of her own, a sample of which we have seen in a previous chapter; but the prisoner remained stubborn. The wife at length ceased to persuade, having, with the quick perception and nice judgment which distinguished her character, observed the true point of difficulty—one not to be easily overcome—and which was to be assailed in a manner much more indirect. She resolved to engage the services of Calvert herself.

Her own curiosity had been raised in some degree by what she had heard in respect to this person; and though

she did not believe the story which Covington got from Sharpe, touching the causes of the duel between himself and rival, yet the fact that they had fought, and that Calvert had been wounded in the conflict with her enemy, of itself commended the former to her regard. As the period for her husband's trial drew nigh, her anxieties naturally increased, so as to strengthen her in the resolution which she had already formed to secure those legal services which Beauchampe had rejected. Accordingly, concealing her purpose she absented herself from the prison, and, having secured the necessary information, set forth on her mission.

Of the prosperous fortunes of William Calvert, some glimpses have already been given to the reader in the course of this narrative. These glimpses, we trust, have sufficed to satisfy any curiosity, which the story of his youth and youthful disappointments might have occasioned in any mind. We understand, of course, that thrown upon his own resources, driven from the maternal petticoats, which enfeeble and destroy so many thousand sons, the necessities to which he was subjected, in the rough attrition of the world, had brought into active exercise all the materials of his physical and intellectual manhood. He had plodded over the dusky volumes of the law with unrelaxing diligence. He had gone through his probationary period without falling into any of those emasculating practices which too often enslave the moral sense and dissipate the intellectual courage of young men. He had graduated with credit; had begun practice with an unusual quantity of business patronage, and had made his debût with a degree of eclât, which, while it put to rest all the apprehensions of the good old man who had adopted him, had effectually recommended him to the public, as one of the strong men to whom they could turn with confidence, to represent the characteristics and maintain the rights of the people.

Of his success, some idea may be formed, if we remember the position in which he stood in the conflict with Colonel

Sharpe. If the latter was the Coryphæus of one party, William Calvert was regarded by all eyes as the most prominent champion of the other; and though the other party might be in the minority, it was not the less obvious to most, that, if the success of the party could be made entirely to depend upon the relative strength of the representative combatants, the result would have been very far otherwise. The best friends of Sharpe, as we have already seen, endeavored to press upon him the belief, which they really felt, that, with such an opponent as William Calvert in the field against him, it would require the exercise of his very best talents in order to maintain his ground. We need not dwell longer on this part of our subject.

But, with the prominence of position, taken of necessity by William Calvert, in the political world, was an accumulation of legal business which necessarily promised fortune. In the brief space of three years which followed his admission to the bar, his clients became so numerous as to render it necessary that he should concentrate his attentions upon a more limited circuit of practice. Other effects followed, and the good old man whose name he had taken, leaving Charlemont, like his protégé, for ever, had come to live with him in the flourishing town where he had taken up his abode. Here their united funds enabled them to buy a fine house and furnish it with a taste which, day by day, added some object of ornament or use.

The comforts being duly considered, the graces were necessarily secured, as the accumulation of means furnished the necessary resources. Books grew upon the already-groaning shelves; sweet landscapes and noble portraits glowed from the walls. With no wife to provide, in those thousand trifles for which no funds would be altogether adequate, in the shocking and offensive style of expenditure which has recently covered our land with sores and spangles, shame and frippery — the income of William Calvert was devoted to the cultivation of such tastes as are

legitimate in the eyes of a truly philosophical judgment. He sought for no attractions but such as gave employment either to the sense of beauty or the growth of the understanding.

The contemplation of the forms of beauty produces in the mind a love of harmony and proportion, which, in turn, establish a nice moral sense, that revolts with loathing at what is mean, coarse, or brutal; and, with this impression, our young lawyer, whenever his purse permitted such outlay, despatched his commission to the Atlantic city for the speaking canvass or the eloquent and breathing bust. In tastes like these his paternal friend fully sympathized with him. In fact they had been first awakened in him by his venerable tutor, during the course of his boyish education. Thus co-operating, and with habits, which, in other respects, were singularly inexpensive, it is not surprising that the dwelling of William Calvert should already be known, among the people of ——, as the very seat of elegance and art. His pictures formed a theme among his acquaintance —and even those who were not—which every new addition contributed to revive and enlarge; and, in the innocent pursuit of such objects of grace and beauty—with books, the philosophies and songs, of the old divines of Nature—her proper priesthood—the days of the youth began to go by sweetly and with such soothing, that the memory of Margaret Cooper, though it never ceased to sadden, yet now failed entirely to sting. He had neither ceased to love nor to regret; but his disappointment did not now occasion a pang, nor was his regret such as to leave him insensible to the genial influences which life everywhere spreads generously around for the working spirit, and the just and gentle heart.

But, as we have seen, William Calvert was not permitted, either by his own nature and pursuits, or by the exactions of society, to indulge simply in the elegancies of life. The possession of active talents of any kind, and in all

regions, implies a proper impulse to their use. This is more particularly the case in our country, where the field is more free than in all others, more open to all comers, and where the absence of hereditary distinctions and a prescriptive social *prestige* compels ambition to strain every nerve in the attainment of position.

The profession of the law itself implies government among us, and politics are apt to lay their talons upon all who exhibit the possession of oratorical powers in connection with the pursuit of law. William Calvert, somewhat in spite of his own tastes and wishes—for he well knew how slavish and degrading were the conditions of public favor in a democracy like ours—was forced to buckle on the armor of party, and take the field in a great local contest, which contemplated federal as well as state politics.

We have seen how suddenly his career was arrested and suspended for a season, by the bullet, at five paces, of his political rival.

His wound—probable owing to the bold course adopted by his venerable counsellor—was not a serious one, though it laid him up for a space, during which his party was defeated; a result which many of its able men were pleased to ascribe mostly to the fact that their chief speaker was thus *hors de combat*. This conviction strengthened his claims in the future, though the immediate battle was lost in which he had been engaged at the time. The defeat was temporary only—that they all felt; and all parties were equally persuaded that the next struggle must eventuate in the elevation of William Calvert to the full supremacy over his own.

The brief period during which he was confined to his chamber by his hurt was one which was crowded with ample testimonies of his popularity with the many, and the grateful esteem with which he was regarded by the select and sacred few. The sturdy yeomen thronged to inquire about his progress with an interest which showed how

deeply he had made his way into the common heart. Nor were the men of mark less earnest and considerate—less solicitous of the fate of one who, as a dangerous rival, must either be denounced or conciliated. Higher and more honorable motives were at work, however, in the breasts of others—too far above the crowd to suffer such as these to abridge their sympathies; and the bedside of our young lawyer was honored by the visits of such great men as Clay and Crittenden. His wound, though rendering his thigh a somewhat sore precinct for a while, was yet productive of much balm and soothing for his mind and heart.

But there was one visiter, over all, whose unexpected presence was eminently grateful, bringing with it not only a true devotion and a genuine sympathy, but recalling so many dear and pleasant passages in a past of various sad and sweet experiences. As soon as his cousin Ned Hinkley heard of his disaster, he hastened off to see and tend upon him, bringing with him nothing but a carpet-bag, with a few changes of linen, his violin, and a pair of pistols, consecrated in the family affections by a grandsire's use of them in Revolutionary periods.

Ned Hinkley, though a good fellow, was inveterate as a violinist. Ned relieved the violin by occasional practice with the pistols. Ned's boast was that he could draw an equally good sight and bow; and Ned was especially anxious to take up the game with Colonel Sharpe—to whom he owed an old grudge as Alfred Stevens—just where his cousin had ended it. Ned's conscience troubled him, too, as being somewhat the occasion of William's present sufferings, as he felt and said, very logically:—

"For you see, Willie, if I had shot that fellow Stevens, five years ago, as I ought to have done, he wouldn't have been able to put an ounce bullet into your bacon!"

It was no fault of Ned, we assure you, that he did not shoot Stevens. He had every disposition to do that oily politician some such touching service.

Ned Hinkley was a good companion. He was lively garrulous, full of quip and crank; could make his fiddle speak when his own tongue was tired; was a very loving kinsman, and no humbug. He was as sincere as sunshine.

He was soon installed beside the couch of the wounded man, relieving old Mr. Calvert of his watch, and sharing with him the grateful employment of amusing the invalid, which he did after a fashion of his own. We give a sample of his quality in this sort of performance:—

"And how does it feel, Willie?"

"How does what feel?"

"Why, the bullet in your hip."

"There is no bullet there now, Ned. It is extracted.

"Well, I know that! What I mean to ask is, what is the sort of sensation which it leaves behind it? Rather a pleasant one, I suppose!"

"Indeed! a curious supposition, Ned."

"Not so! In small wounds, such is the case usually when they are in a way to heal. I have so found it in my own case. When I was getting better of that ugly gash I got at muster six years ago—you remember—from Ralph Byers, I was really delighted by the sensation. There was a sort of pleasant tickling going on all the time, as Nature was taking up the old threads and reuniting them. So, when I shot off that finger, trying Tom Curtis's little double barrel—after the first pain of the thing was over, I began to feel a sort of pleasure in the sensation; and I suppose there's good reason for it. Nature, as a matter of course, like a good surgeon, will do her best to soothe one's hurts on such an occasion, by some secret remedial processes of her own. The fact is, I always found so much pleasure in getting well on such occasions, that I found myself always pulling and picking at the wound, just to keep up a sort of irritation, so as to prolong the duration of the cure."

"Comical! On the same plan, if you found a medicine, however nauseous, doing its work effectually, you will re-

quire that the dose should be doubled, and take some of the physic daily, with the same object—the prolongation of the benefit."

"Not so—no! The analogy fails, Willie. The skin, or flesh, is one thing; but the stomach is another—quite. No tampering with that! It is sacred to fish, flesh, fowl, and physic is its abomination. I don't believe in physic, though I do in the pleasure of flesh-wounds."

The tuning of the fiddle followed this philosophy; and, under the sedative influences of an original fantasia which might have afforded some new ideas to Ole Bull, William Calvert sank off into a pleasant slumber, leaving Ned in the midst of a backwoods commentary on the nature, the sources, and the methods of music, particularly of violin-music, which he held to be the proper foundation of every other sort.

Ned Hinkley thus, alternating between his sister's farmstead and the house of his cousin—the two places being some twelve miles apart—continued to visit and console William Calvert through the month of his confinement.

And this was no small sacrifice on the part of Ned, when we are told that, in addition to the fatigue of such a ride some three or four times a week, he was busily engaged in all the rigors of a warm courtship. Of course, he told his cousin the whole history of his wooing.

"Well—but, Ned, how is it that you have forborne all description of Miss Bernard?"

"Sallie Bernard is indescribable, Willie."

"What! so very beautiful?"

"No! I don't think that even a lover would call her beautiful."

"Is she so wise, then—so highly endowed with intellect, and the graces and accomplishments?"

"No, I can't say that either! The fact is, Willie, that Sallie is nothing more than a clever country-girl—a good girl, a loving girl, a gentle girl, and a willing girl—and

that word *willing* goes a great ways with me in a woman. I don't go for wisdom, and learning, and great talents, and great beauties, and charms, and graces, in a wife, Willie; I go for a woman—a true woman—that knows she's the weaker vessel, and knows what's due to her lord and master. I am after a wife, not a philosopher in petticoats. I want a wife who will be the mother of my children; not a conceited fool, who is perpetually trying to show the world that she is more of a man than her husband, as is the case generally with all that sort of people, of whom your famous Margaret Cooper was a particularly superb brimstone example."

"Nothing of *her*, Ned," said the other sadly. "Tell me of your Sallie Bernard."

"Well, perhaps I'd better tell you in poetry. You know that I too have written verses, and was no small fish at it, as you remember. I am half disposed to think that my verses were sometimes quite as good as yours. You remember the lines I wrote upon the old mill at Charlemont?"

"Yes: they were really very good, Ned."

"To be sure they were! I doubt if you could do better, try your best. Then there was the epitaph I made on poor old Wolf, my bull-terrier. 'Gad! I liked it better than Lord Byron's on his Newfoundland pup. But I've done better things since, that I never showed you; and some of my lines about Sallie are, to my thinking, quite good enough to be put into a magazine."

"Very likely, Ned—and yet not make you sure of cedar-oil immortality. But let's have your metrical portrait of Miss Sallie."

"You shall! I'm not squeamish about it; and these verses are just about the proper answer to your question. They tell you just why I love Sallie, and for what a man ought to seek a wife. They're rough yet, for I haven't had time to pass the smoothing-iron over them. But I'll work

'em out in ship-shape yet, and make a spiggot or spoil a horn. Now, don't you begin to find fault, and stop me, whenever you fancy there's a hitch in the verse. I'll bring it all right when I turn in to smoothing out."

William Calvert gave the required assurance; and, with few more preliminaries—for Ned Hinkley was a downright, to-the-purpose, matter-of-fact fellow—with little nonsense or conceit about him, and no affectations—he recited, or rather chanted, the following rude ballad, which, for the backwoods muse, Calvert was inclined to think a very creditable performance; and we quite agree with him, and could wish to see it married to corresponding harmonies by some such priest in music as Mr. Russell:—

I.

"You ask me why I love her—
Why my heart, no longer free,
Is no more a wingéd rover,
Like the forest-bird or bee:
Ah! love still hath its season,
For the heart as for the tree;
Would you have a better reason,
Then my love loves me!
I know it well, I know it—
My love loves me!

II.

"You say she is not beautiful,
And it may be so to you;
But she's very fond and dutiful,
And she's very kind and true:
And there's beauty in the tenderness
That every eye can see,
And something more than loveliness
In the love she feels for me!
I know it well, &c.

III.

"She's no strong-minded woman,
And in weighty things unwise;
But a loving heart, all human,
Is to me a dearer prize:

And there's a sovereign wisdom
In much loving, do you see;
And a pure young soul, in a loving breast,
Makes a woman wise for me!
I know it well, &c.

IV.

"You may talk of stately damsels,
With keen wit and manners fine—
But a true young heart's affections
Are the jewels dear to mine!
And I own enough of splendor,
When her loving eyes I see;
And I hear sufficient wisdom,
When she murmurs love to me!
I know it well, &c.

V.

"You may try her faith, and tell her
Of a prouder suitor still—
One whose name and wealth may bring her
To whatever state she will;
That I've naught to boast of power—
Neither wealth nor fame—yet she
Will smile—so well I know her—
And still give her love to me!
I know it well, &c."

"There—you have it! Now, that's what I call good sense, Willie Calvert, and no bad poetry either."

"It is positively beautiful, Ned, and contains more of the true philosophy of love and marriage than half the treatises ever written. Positively, Ned, you surprise me! Your improvement is prodigious. You must set up the poetical sign. Were you, now, in some of the great cities, following up some of the popular singers, you could have that ballad united to music which would make your name famous."

"I thought you'd like it, Willie—I knew you would. It is a good ballad, Willie—very good; and it's true, Willie. Sallie Bernard deserves it all. She's the very woman of the verses."

"And she has accepted you, Ned?"

"On the fifteenth day of the very next November, Willie, we go into cohoot for life—God willing, and weather permitting."

William Calvert warmly congratulated his kinsman, and closed the speech with a deep sigh from the very bottom of his heart.

"Don't sigh, William. Your time will come yet. Ah! if you had only fancied some such true, sweet, humble-hearted, and devoted girl as Sallie, instead of that proud, great-eyed, outlawed woman, Margaret Cooper—"

"Hush, hush, Ned!—name her not!"

The other muttered something more, no doubt expressive of the indignation which he felt at the treatment his cousin had received from Margaret Cooper. The good fellow had never admired that damsel. He was, in truth, afraid of her. She was the only person that had ever fairly awed him into distance and apprehension. While he still muttered, William Calvert said:—

"Open that desk, Ned, and hand me the book in a blue cover which you will find in it."

This was done.

"I, too, have written some verses lately, Ned, which somewhat relate to my own affections. They are, by no means, so good as yours, but they will enforce my plea to you for forbearance in reference to Margaret."

And, without further word, William read the following apostrophe:—

"Speak not the name, in scorn or blame,
Nor link her thought with aught of shame,
Nor ask of me, the guilt to see
That tore my blossom from the tree!

"We may not crush the thought, or hush
The tale that still compels the blush;
But we may chide the speech, and hide
The shame, that else would torture pride!

"Deep in the heart, a thing apart,
We shrine the memory of the smart;
And only gaze on happier days,
When Love and Pride could gladly praise.

"There let me hold, nor cheap nor cold,
The image shrined I loved of old;
There let me know the charm, the glow,
And not the shame, the guilt, the wo!

"Beneath that spell, still let her dwell,
Pure, bright, as when I loved so well—
Where, haply taught, the older thought
Can see of fall or frailty naught.

"With Love for guest, the faithful breast
Shuts out all entrance to the rest,
And asks no more, from Memory's store,
Than what the heart can still adore.

"Oh! when she grew, no more in view,
The starlike thing that once I knew,
I deemed her fled, I wept her dead—
Not frail, not shamed, but lost instead.

"Her fall, though fraught with grief, has taught
Love's lesson to the sterner thought;
And Grief's worst moan now takes its tone
From what young Memories loved alone!"

"Ah! Willie, that's a poetical huckleberry above my sour rhyming persimmon. How well you do those things! Why, that's a sort of treble-shotted verse. Now, those cursed rhymes won't come to me when I call for 'em!—They are as obstinate as those abominable spirits of 'the vasty deep' that turned a deaf ear to Mr. Glendower. You must help me, Willie, to polish my ballad, before I send it to Sallie Bernard."

"Don't touch it, Ned; it needs no polishing. It is as nearly perfect as you can make it. Its very carelessness is in its favor as a song. It shows it to be an outpouring, a gushing upward, of the fancy, which is the true proof of a good thing for music. No, no! don't touch it. Its sim-

plicity is its secret. One sees that the art has been entirely subservient to Nature, as it always should be in such things. But, go and ramble now, Ned, and leave me for a while to slumber. Your talk and my own, with such subjects as we have been dealing with, have left me a little too much excited. Go, and write to Sallie."

"'Gad! if she were here!" cried the tall fellow, stretching out his arms as if to embrace the universe—

"If she were only here—smack!" And, so saying, he disappeared.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE MEETING.

"And do we meet again,
After that mournful parting! Both how changed;
You with new pinions — mine all soiled and broken!"

It was when William Calvert had regained his legs and began to resume his customary vocations, that Ned Hinkley suddenly made his appearance, one day, almost bursting with excitement. The story of the Beauchampes had reached his ears; the marriage of Margaret Cooper with Beauchampe, and the subsequent murder of Colonel Sharpe. He was the first to reveal the whole tragedy to the Calverts.

It was a story to make them gloomy enough — to strike them into silence. When they could speak of the subject, it was only in language so inadequate that the topic was dropped as by mutual consent.

"Can we do anything for them?" was the question of William Calvert.

It was one which all parties strove to answer but in vain.

Ned Hinkley alone lingered over the subject.

"It was her doings, all. She, no doubt, beguiled the young fool into marriage. She prompted him to avenge her dishonor on the head of Sharpe. I would have done it myself, with half an opportunity, but I would have shot myself sooner than received the reward."

William Calvert rebuked the speech in his sternest manner, and Ned Hinkley rode off, happy in the prospect of a wife who was not a strong-minded woman. He left the two Calverts to brood together over the melancholy narrative which they had heard.

We have already formed a sufficient idea of the dwelling which William Calvert occupied—a dwelling in just correspondence with his improved fortunes. The reader will please go with us while we re-enter it. Ned Hinkley has been gone some two hours. We ascend the neat and always well-swept porch, and pass through the common hall into the parlor. It has now but a single occupant. Old Calvert is there alone. His adopted son has retired to his chamber. He broods alone on the fate of Margaret Cooper, and of the wretched young man to whom she has been a fate. The old man broods also, sadly too on the same subject, but he is so happy in his own protégé, that his mind does not yield itself with any intensity, to the case of other parties, no matter what their futures. And this is a law of our nature, else we should suffer unprofitably from those afflictions, to which we can offer no relief.

Old Calvert has become older since we last painted his portrait. His hair has grown even more silvery and thin and his forehead whiter, more capacious, more polished. In other respects, however, he seems to have undergone but little change. His skin is quite as smooth as ever; but little wrinkled; the crows have not trampled very vigorously about the corners of his eyes. His heart is comparatively at ease; his eye is bright as of old—nay, even brighter than when we last saw it dilating over the valley of Charlemont: and, perhaps, with reason. His warmest hopes have been gratified; his worst doubts dissipated; his heart has become uplifted. He has realized the pride of a father without suffering the trials and apprehensions of one; and with heart and body equally in health, he is still young for a gentle spirit in age, is not a bad beginning of the

soul's immortality. He owes this state of mind and body, to a contemplative habit acquired in youth; to the presence of a nice governing sense of justice, and to that abstinence which would have justified in him the brag of good old Adam, in "As You Like It:"—

> "For in my youth I never did apply
> Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood;
> Nor did not, with unbashful forehead woo,
> The means of weakness and debility;
> Therefore my age is as a lusty winter,
> Frosty but kindly."

The old man sits in the snug, well-cushioned armchair, with his eyes cast upward. A smile mantles upon his face. His glance rests upon a portrait of his favorite; and as he gazes upon the well-limned and justly-drawn features—and as the mild and speaking eye seems to answer to his own—the unconscious words tremble out from his lips! Good old man!—he recalls the early lessons that he gave the boy; how kindly they were taken—with what readiness they were acquired; and the sweet humility which followed most of his rebukes. Then, he renews the story of the first lessons in law—his own struggles and defeats he recalls—only, as it would seem, to justify the exultation which announces, under *his* guidance, the better fortunes of the youth.

And thus soliloquizing, he rises, and mounting a chair, dusts the picture with his handkerchief, with a solicitude that has seen a speck upon the cheek, and fancies a fly upon the hair! This was a daily task, performed unconsciously, and under the same course of spiriting!

While thus engaged a servant enters and speaks. He answers, but without any thought of what he is saying. The servant disappears, and the door is re-opened. The old man is still busy at the heart-prompted duty. His lips are equally busy in dilating upon the merits of his favorite. He still wipes and rewipes the picture; draws back to ex

amine the outline; comments upon eye and forehead; and dreams not, the while, what eye surveys his toils—what ear is listening to the garrulous eulogium that is dropping from his lips. The intruder is Margaret Cooper—Mrs. Beauchampe we should have said—but for a silent preference for the former name, for which we can give no reason and will offer no excuse.

She stands in silence—she watches the labor of the good old man with mixed but not unpleasant feelings. She recognises him at a glance. She does not mistake the features of that portrait which exacts his care. She gazes on that, too, with a very melancholy interest. The features, though the same, are yet those of another. The expression of the face is spiritualized and lifted. It is the face of William Hinkley—true—but not the face of the rustic, whom once she knew beneath that name. The salient points of feature are subdued. The roughness has disappeared, and is succeeded by the entreating sweetness and placid self-subjection which shows that the moulding hand of the higher civilization has been there. It is William Hinkley, the gentleman—the man of thought, and of the world—whose features meet her eye; and a sigh involuntarily escapes her lips. That sigh is the involuntary utterance of the self-reproach which she feels. Her conscience smites her for the past. She thinks of the young man, worthy and gentle, whom she slighted for another—and that other!—She remembers the youth's goodness—his fond devotedness; and, forgetting in what respect he erred, she wonders at herself, with feelings of increasing humiliation, that she should have repulsed and treated him so harshly. But, in those days she was mad! It is her only consolation that she now thinks so.

Her sigh arrests the attention of the old man and awakens him from his grateful abstraction. He turns, beholds the lady, and muttering something apologetically, about the rapid accumulation of dust and cobwebs, he de-

scends from the chair. A step nearer to the visiter informs him who she is. He starts, and trembles.

"You, Miss Cooper: can it be?"

"It is, Mr. Calvert; but there is some mistake. I sought for Colonel Calvert, the lawyer."

"My son—no mistake at all—be seated, Miss Cooper."

"Your son, Mr. Calvert?"

"Yes, my son—your old acquaintance—but here he is!"—

William Calvert, the younger, had now joined the party. His entrance had been unobserved. He stood in the doorway—his eye fixed upon the object of his former passion. His cheeks were very pale; his features were full of emotion. Margaret turned as the old man spoke, and their eyes encountered. What were their several emotions then? Who shall tell them? What scenes, what a story, did that one single glance of recognition recall. How much strife and bitterness—what overwhelming passions—and what defeat, what shame, and sorrow to the one; and to the other—what triumph over pain—what victory even from defeat. To her, from pride, exultation, and estimated triumph, had arisen shame, overthrow, and certain fear. Despair was not yet—not altogether. To the other, "out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." From his defeat he was strengthened; and from the very overthrow of his youthful passion, had grown the vigor of his manhood.

The thought of William Calvert, as he surveyed the woman of his first love, was a natural one:—"Had she been mine!"—but with this thought he did not now repine at the baffled dream and desire of his boyhood. If the memory and reflection were not sweet, at least the bitter was one to which his lips had become reconciled by time. Recalling the mournful memory of the past, his sorrow was now rather for her than for himself. His regret was not that he had been denied, but that she had fallen. He rec-

ollected the day of her pride. He recalled the flashes of that eagle spirit, which, while it won his admiration, had spurned his prayer. The bitter shame which followed, when, by crawling, the serpent had reached the summits where her proud soul kept in an eyry of its own, oppressed *his* soul as he gazed upon the still beautiful, still majestic being before him. She too had kept something of that noble spirit which was hers before she fell. We have seen how she had sustained herself:—

> "Not yet lost
> All her original brightness, nor appeared
> Less than archangel ruined, and th' *excess*
> Of glory obscured;"—

and still, as the youth gazed, he wondered—and as he remembered, he could not easily restrain the impulse once more to sink in homage. But all her story was now known to him. Of Sharpe's murder he was aware; and that the wife of the murderer was the same Margaret Cooper, in whose behalf he had himself met the betrayer in single combat, he was apprized by a private letter from Covington.

While he thus stood beholding, with such evident tokens of emotion, the hapless woman who had been the cause, and the victim, equally, of so much disaster—what were her reflections at the sight of him? At first, when their eyes encountered, and she could no longer doubt the identity of the Colonel Calvert whom she sought, with the William Hinkley whom she had so long and yet so little known, her color became heightened—her form insensibly rose, and her eye resumed something of that ancient eagle-look of defiance, which was the more natural expression of her proud and daring character. She felt, in an instant, all the difference between the present and the past; between his fortune and her own—and, naturally assuming that the same comparison was going on in his mind, necessarily leading to his exaltation at her expense, she was prepared,

with equal look and word, to resent the insolence of his triumph.

But when, at a second glance, she beheld the unequivocal grief which his looks expressed—when she saw still, that the fire in his heart had not been quenched—that the feeling there had nothing in it of triumph—but all of a deep abiding sorrow and a genuine commiseration, her manner changed—the bright, keen expression parted from her glance, and her cheek grew instantly pale. But her firmness and presence of mind returned sooner than his. She advanced and extended to him her hand.

The manner was so frank, so confiding, that it seemed to atone for all the past. It evidently was intended to convey the only atonement which, in her situation, she could possibly offer. It said much more than words, and his heart was satisfied. He took her hand and conducted her to a seat. He was silent. It was with great difficulty that he withheld the expression of his tears.

"You know me, Colonel Calvert," she at length said. "I see you know me."

"Could you think otherwise, Margaret?" he succeeded in replying. "Could I forget?"

"No! not forget, perhaps," she returned; "but you seem not to understand me. My person, of course, you know—who I was—but not who I am?"

"Yes—even that too I know."

"Then something is spared me!" she replied with the sigh of one who is relieved from a painful duty.

"I know the whole sad story, Margaret—Mrs. Beauchampe. Can I serve you, Margaret—is it for this you seek me?"

"It is."

"I am ready. I will do what I can. But it will be necessary to see Mr. Beauchampe."

"Can not that be avoided? I confess, I come to you without his sanction or authority. He is unwilling to seek

assistance from the law, and proposes either to argue his own case, or to leave it, unargued, to the just sense of the community."

The youth mused in silence for a few moments, before he replied. At length:—

"I will not hide from you, Margaret—forgive me—Mrs. Beauchampe—the danger in which your husband stands. The frequency of such deeds as that for which he is indicted, has led to a general feeling on the part of the community, that the laws must be rigorously enforced. But—"

She interrupted him with some vehemence: "But the provocation of the villain he slew—"

She stopped suddenly. She trembled, for the truth had been revealed in her inadvertence.

"What have I said!" she exclaimed.

"Only what shall be as secret with me, Margaret, as with yourself—"

"Oh, more so, I trust!" she ejaculated.

"Do not distress yourself with this. Understand me. It was to gather from Mr. Beauchampe the whole truth, that I desired to see him. To do him justice, I must know from him what may be known by others, and which might do him hurt. It is to prepare for the worst, that I would seek to know the worst. I will return with you to Frankfort. I will see him. He, as a lawyer, will better understand my purpose than yourself."

"Ah! I thank you—I thank you, William Hinkley. I feel that I do not deserve this at *your* hands. You are avenged—amply avenged—for all the past!"

She covered her face with her hands. Memories, bitter memories, were rushing in upon her soul.

"Speak not thus, Margaret," replied the youth in subdued and trembling accents. "I need no such atonement as this. Believe me, to know what you were, and should have been, Margaret, and see you thus, brings to me no

feelings but those of shame and sorrow. Such promise—such pride of promise, Margaret—"

"Ah! indeed! such pride—such pride!—and what a fall!—there could not be a worse, William—surely not a worse!—"

"But there is hope still, Margaret—there is hope."

"You will save him!" she said, eagerly.

"I trust," said he, "that there is hope for him. I will try to save him."

"I know you will—I know you will! But, even then, there is no hope. I feel like a wreck. Even if we founder not in this storm—even if you save us, William—it will be as if some once good ship, shattered and shivered, was carried into port by some friendly prow—only to be abandoned as then no longer worth repair. These storms have shattered me, William—shattered me quite! I am no longer what I was—strong, proud, confident. I fear, sometimes, that my brain will go wild. I feel that my mind is failing me. I speak now with an erring tongue. I scarcely know what I say. But I speak with a faith *in you*. I believe, William, you were always true."

"Ah, had you but believed so *then*, Margaret!—"

"I did! I did believe so!"

"Ah, could it have been, Margaret!—could you have only thought—"

"No more—say no more!" she exclaimed, hurriedly, with a sort of shudder. "Say no more!"

"Had it been," he continued, musingly—"could it have been, there had been now no wreck. Neither of us had felt these storms. We had both been happy!"

"No, no! speak not thus, William Hinkley!" she exclaimed, rising, and putting on a stern look and freezing accent. "The past should be—is—nothing now to us. Nor could it have been as you say. There was a fate to humble *me;* and I am here now to sue for *your* succor. *You* have nothing to deplore. You have fortune which you

could not hope, fame which you did not seek—everything to make you proud, and keep you happy."

"I am neither proud nor happy, Margaret. You—"

"Enough!" she exclaimed. "You have promised to strive in his behalf. Save *him*, William Hinkley—and if prayer of mine can avail before Heaven, you will feel this want no longer. You *must* be happy!"

"Happy, Margaret?—I do not hope for it!"

She extended him her hand. He took it, and instantly released it, though not before a scalding tear had fallen from his eyes upon it. Further farewell than this they had none. She looked round for old Mr. Calvert, but he was no longer in the apartment.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

"GUILTY!"

We pass over the interviews between Beauchampe and William Calvert. At none of these was the wife present. The former was satisfied to accept the services of one who approached him with the best manners of the gentleman, and the happy union, in his address, of the sage and lawyer; and he freely narrated to him all the particulars of that deed for which he was held to answer. Calvert was put in possession of all that was deemed necessary to the defence, or rather of all that Beauchampe knew.

But, either the latter did not know *all*, or perjury was an easily-bought commodity upon his trial. There were witnesses to swear to his footsteps, to his voice, his face, his words, his knife and clothes; though he believed that no living eye, save that of the Omniscient, beheld him in his approaches to commit the deed. The knife which struck the blow was buried in the earth. The clothes which he wore were sunk in the river. Yet a knife was produced on the trial as that which had pierced the heart of the victim; and witnesses identified him in garments which he no longer possessed, and in which, according to his belief, they had never seen him!

It is possible that he deceived himself. There can be no doubt that he was just enough of the maniac, while carrying out the monomania which made him so, to be conscious of little else but the one stirring, all-absorbing

passion in his mind. Such a man walks the streets, and sees no form save that which occupies his imagination; speaks his purpose in soliloquy which his own ears never heed; fancies himself alone, though surrounded by spectatators. His microcosm is within. He has, while the leading idea is busy in his soul, no consciousness of any world without.

Could we record the argument of Calvert—analyze for the reader the voluminous and not always consorting testimony, as he analyzed it for the court—and repeat, word for word, and look for look, the exquisite appeal which he offered to the jury—we should be amply justified in occupying, in these pages, the considerable space which such a record would require. But we dare not make the attempt; the more particularly, as, however able and admirable, the speech failed of its effect. Eyes were wet, sighs were audible at its close; but the jury, if moved by the eloquence of the advocate, were obdurate, so far as concerned the prisoner. The verdict was rendered "Guilty!" and, with the awful word, Mrs. Beauchampe started to her feet, and accused herself to the court, not only of participating in the offence, but of prompting it. It was supposed to be a merciful forbearance that Justice permitted herself to become deaf, as well as blind, on this occasion. Her wild asseverations were not employed against her; and she failed of the end she sought—to unite her fate, at the close, with that of him to whom, as she warned him in the beginning, she herself was a fate.

But, though she failed to provoke Justice to prosecution, she was yet not to be baffled in her object. Her resolution was taken, to share the doom of her husband. For her he had incurred the judgment of the criminal, and her nature was too magnanimous to think of surviving him. She resolved upon death in her own case, and at the same time resolved on defeating, in his, that brutal exposure which attends the execution of the laws. But of her purpose she

said nothing—not even to him whom it most concerned. With that stern directness of purpose which formed so distinguishing a trait in her character, she made her preparations in secret. The indulgence of the authorities permitted her to see her husband at pleasure, and to share with him, when she would, the sad privilege of his dungeon. This indulgence was not supposed to involve any risk, since a guard was designated to maintain a constant watch upon the prisoner; and it does not seem to have entered into the apprehensions of the jailer to provide against any danger except that of the convict's escape.

The dungeon of the condemned was a close cell, the only entrance to which was by a trap-door from above. Escape from this place, with a guard in the upper chamber, was not an easy performance, nor did it seem to enter for a moment into the calculation or designs of either of the Beauchampes. The husband was prepared to die; and the solemn, though secret determination of the wife, had prepared her also. The former considered his fate with the feeling of a martyr; and every word of the latter was intended to confirm, in his mind, this strengthening and consoling conviction. The few days which were left to the criminal were not otherwise unsoothed and unlighted from without. Friends came to him in his dungeon, and strove, with the diligence of love, to convert the remaining hours of his life into profitable capital for the future grand investment of immortality. Religion lent her aid to friendship; and, whether Beauchampe did or did not persist in the notion that the crime for which he stood condemned was praiseworthy, at all events he was persuaded by her unremitting cares and counsels that he was a sinner—sinning in a thousand respects, for which repentance was the only grand remedy which could atone to God for the wrongs done, and left unrepaired, to man.

Among the friends who now constantly sought the cell of the criminal, William Calvert was none of the least punctual.

Beauchampe became very fond of him, and felt, in a short time, the vast superiority of his mind and character over those of his late tutor. The wife, meanwhile, with that fearless frankness which knows thoroughly the high value of the most superior truth—for truth has its qualities and degrees, though each may be intrinsically pure—had freely told her husband the whole history of the early devotion of William Calvert, when she knew him as the obscure William Hinkley; how, blinded by her own vanity, and the obscurity to which the very modesty of the young rustic had subjected him, she despised his pretensions; and, for the homage of the sly serpent by whom she had been deceived—beguiled with his lying tongue, and pleased with his gaudy coat—had slighted the superior worth of the former, and treated his claims with a scorn as little deserved by him as becoming in her. Sometimes, Beauchampe spoke of this painful past in the history of his wife and visiter, and the reference now did not seem to give pain, at least to the former. The reason was good: she had done with the past. The considerations which now filled her mind were all of a superior nature; and she listened to her husband, even when he spoke on this theme in the presence of William Calvert himself, with an unmoved and unabashed countenance. The latter possessed no such stoicism. At such moments his heart beat with a wildly-increased rapidity of pulsation, and he felt the warm flush pass over his cheeks as vividly and quickly now as in the days of his first youthful consciousness of love.

It was the evening preceding the day of execution. The dark hours were at hand. The guard of the prison had warned the visiters to depart. The divine had already gone. The drooping sisters of Beauchampe were about to go for the night, moaning wildly as they went, in anticipation of the day of awful moan which was approaching. Fond and fervent, and very sad, was the parting, though for the night only, which the condemned gave to these dear twin-

buds of his affections. It was a pang spared to him that his poor old mother was too sick to see him. When he thought of her, and of the unspeakable misery which would be hers were she present, he felt the grief lessened which followed from the thought that their eyes might never more encounter.

But the sisters went—all went but William Calvert; and he seemed disposed to linger to the last permitted moment. His thoughts were less with the condemned man than with the wife. His eyes were fixed upon the same object. His anxiety and surprise increased with each moment of his gaze. Whence could arise that strange serenity which appeared in her countenance? Where did she find that strength which, at such an hour, could give her composure? Nor was it serenity and composure alone which distinguished her air, look, and carriage. There was a holy intentness, a sublime decision in her look, which filled him with apprehension. He knew the daring of her character—the bold disposition which had always possessed her to dare the dark and the unknown—and his prescient conjecture divined her intention.

She sat behind her husband, on his lowly pallet. Calvert occupied a stool at its foot. Beauchampe had been speaking freely with all his visiters. He was only moved by the feeling of his situation on separating from his sisters. At all other periods he was tolerably calm, and sometimes his conversation ran into playfulness. When we say playfulness, we do not mean to be understood as intimating his indulgence of mere fun and jest, which would have been as inconsistent with his general character as with the solemn responsibility of his situation. But there was an ease of heart about what he said—an elastic freedom—which insensibly colored, with a freshness and vitality, the idea which he uttered.

"Sit closer to me, Anna," he said to his wife—"sit closer. We are not to be so long together, that we can

spare these moments. We have no time for distance and formality. Calvert will excuse this fondness, however annoying it might seem between man and wife at ordinary periods."

He took her hand in his as she drew nigh, and passed his arm fondly about her waist. She was silent; and Calvert, thinking of the conjecture which had been awakened in his mind by the deportment of the wife, was too full of serious and startling thoughts to be altogether assured of what Beauchampe was saying. The latter continued, after a brief pause, by a reference of some abruptness to the past history of the two:—

"It seems to me the strangest thing in the world, Anna, that you should ever have refused to marry our friend Calvert. My days," he said, turning to the latter as he spoke —"my days of idle speech and vain flattery are numbered, Calvert; and you will do me the justice to believe that I am not the man to waste words at any time in worthless compliment. Certainly I will not now. But, since I have known you, I feel that I could wish to know no more desirable friend; and how my wife could have rejected you for any other person—I care not whom—I do not exclude myself—I can not understand, unless by supposing that there is a special fate in such matters, by which our best judgments are set at naught, and our wisest plans baffled. Had she married *you*, Calvert—"

"Why will you speak of it?" said Calvert, with an earnestness of tone which yet faltered. The wife was still silent. Beauchampe answered:—

"Because I speak as one to whom the business of life is over. I am speaking as one from the grave. The passions are dumb within me. The strifes are over. The vain delicacies of society seem a child's play to me now. Besides, I speak regretfully. For her sake, how much better had it been! Instead of being, as she is now, the wife of a convict, doomed to a dog's death; instead of the long strife

through which she has gone; instead of the utter waste of that proud genius which might, under other fortunes, have taken such noble flights, and attained such a noble eminence—"

The wife interrupted him with a smile:—

"Ah, Beauchampe, you are supposing that the world has but one serpent—but one Alfred Stevens! The eagle in his flight may escape one arrow, but who shall insure him against the second or the third? I suspect that few persons at the end of life—of a long life—looking back, with all their knowledge and experience, could recommence the journey and find it any smoother or safer than at first. He is the best philosopher who, when the time comes to die, can wash his hands of life the soonest, with the least effort, and dispose his robes most calmly—and so gracefully—around him. Do not speak of what I have lost, and of what I have suffered. Still less is it needful that you should speak of our friend's affairs. We are all chosen, I suspect. Our fortunes are assigned us. That of our friend was never more favorable than when mine prompted my refusal of his kind offer. I was not made for him, nor he for me. We might not have been happy together; and for the best reason, since I was too blind and ignorant to see what I should have seen—that the very humility which I despised in him was the source of his strength, and would have been of my security. I now congratulate him that I was blind to his merits. He will live; he will grow stronger with each succeeding day; fortune will smile upon his toils, and fame will follow them. At least, we will pray, Beauchampe, that such will be the case. At parting, William Hinkley—I can not call you by the other name *now*—at parting, for ever—believe this assurance. You shall have our prayers and blessings—such as they are—truly, fondly, my friend, for we owe much to your help and sympathy."

"For ever, Margaret!—Why should *you* say for ever?"

Calvert fastened his eyes upon her as she spoke. She met the glance unmoved, and replied:—

"Will it not be for ever? To-morrow which deprives me of *him*, deprives me of the world. I must hide from it. I have no more business with it, nor it with me. I have still some sense of shame—some feelings of sacred sorrow—which I should be loath to expose to its busy finger. Is not this enough, William Calvert?"

"But I am not the world. Friends you will still need; my good, old father—"

She shook her head.

"I know what you would say, William: I know all your goodness of heart, and thank you from the very bottom of mine. Let it suffice that, should I need a friend after to-morrow, I shall seek none other than you."

"Margaret," said William, impressively, "you can not deceive me. I know your object. I see it in your eyes—in those subdued tones. I am sure of what you purpose."

"What purpose? what do you mean?" demanded Beauchampe

Before he could be answered by Calvert the wife had spoken. She addressed herself to the latter.

"And if you do know it, William Hinkley, you know it only by the conviction in your own heart of what, if not unavoidable, is at least necessary. Speak not of it—give it no thought, and only ask of yourself what, to me, to such a soul as mine, would be life after to-morrow's sun has set! Go now—the guard calls. You will see us in the morning."

"Margaret—for your soul's sake—"

The expostulation was arrested by the repeated summons of the guard. The wife put her finger on her lips in sign of silence. Calvert prepared to depart, but could not forbear whispering in her ears the exhortation which he had begun to speak aloud. She heard him patiently to the end, and sweetly, but faintly smiling, she shook her head.

making no other answer. The hoarse voice of the guard again summoned the visiter, who reluctantly rose to obey. He shook hands with Beauchampe, and Margaret followed him to the foot of the ladder. When he gave her his hand she carried it to her lips.

"God bless you, William Hinkley!" she murmured. "You are and have been a noble gentleman. Remember me kindly, and oh! forgive me that I did you wrong, that I did not do justice to your feelings and your worth. Perhaps it was better that I did not."

"Let me pray to you, Margaret. Do not— oh! do not what you design. Spare yourself."

"Ay, William, I will! Shame, certainly, the bitter mock of the many—the silent derision of the few—deceit and fraud—reproach without and within—all these will I spare myself."

"Come! come!" said the guard gruffly, from above, "will you never be done talking? Leave the gentleman to his prayers. His time is short!"

And thus they parted for the night.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

FATAL PURPOSES.

"WHAT did Calvert mean, Anna, when he said he knew your purpose?" was the inquiry of Beauchampe, when she returned to his side; "what do you intend?—what purpose have you?"

She put her hand upon her lips in sign of silence, then looked up to the trap-door, which the guard was slowly engaged in letting down. When this was done, she approached him, and drawing a vial from her bosom displayed it cautiously before his eyes.

"For me!" he exclaimed—"poison!"

A sort of rapturous delight gathered in his eyes as he clutched the vial.

"Enough for both of us!" was the answer. "It is laudanum."

"Enough for both, Anna! Surely you can not mean—"

"To share it with you, my husband. To die with you, as you die for me."

"Not so! This must not be. Speak not—think not thus, my wife. Such a thought makes me wretched. There is no need that *you* should die."

"Ay, but there is, Beauchampe. I should suffer much worse were I to live. Where could I live? How could I live? To be the scorned, and the slandered—to provoke the brutal jest, or more brutal violence of the fopling and the fool! For, who that knows my story, will believe in

my virtue; and who that doubts, will scruple to approach me as if he knew that I had none! If I have neither joy nor security in life, why should I live; and if death keeps us together, Beauchampe, why should I fear to die? Should I not rather rejoice, my husband?"

"Ah! but of that we know nothing. That is the doubt—the curse, Anna!"

"I do not doubt—I can not. Our crime, if crime it be, is one—our punishment will doubtless be one also."

"It were then no punishment. No, Anna, live! You have friends who will protect you—who will respect and love you. There is Colonel Calvert—"

"Do not speak of him, Beauchampe. Speak of none. I am resolute to share with you the draught. We tread the dark valley together."

"You shall not! It is in my grasp—no drop shall pass your lips. It is enough for me only."

"Ah, Beauchampe! would you be cruel?"

"Kind only, dear wife. I can not think of you dying—so young, so beautiful, and born with such endowments—so formed to shine, to bless—"

"To kill rather—to blight, Beauchampe; to darken the days of all whom I approach. This has ever been my fate; it shall be so no longer. Beauchampe, you can not baffle me in my purpose. See!—even if you refuse to share with me the poison, I have still another resource."

She drew a knife from her sleeve and held it up before his eyes, but beyond the reach of his arm.

"Oh! why will you persist in this, my wife? Why make these few moments, which are left me, as sad as they are short and fleeting."

"I seek not to do so, dear husband; nor should my resolution have this effect. Would you have me live for such sorrows, such indignities, as I have described to you."

"You would not suffer them! Give me the knife, Anna."

"No! my husband!" She restored it to her sleeve. "I

have sworn to die with you, and no power on arth shall persuade me to survive."

"Not *my* entreaties—*my* prayers, Anna!"

"No! Beauchampe!—not even *your* prayers shall change my purpose."

"Nay, then, I will call the guard!"

"And if you do, Beauchampe, the sound of your voice shall be the signal for me to strike. Believe me, husband, I do not speak idly!"

The knife was again withdrawn from her sleeve as she spoke, and the bared point placed upon her bosom.

"Put it up, dearest; I promise not to call. Put it up, from sight. Believe me—I will not call!"

"Do not, Beauchampe; and do not, I implore you, again seek to disturb my resolution. Move me you can not. I have reached it only by calmly considering what I am, and what would be left me when you are gone. I have seen enough in this examination to make me turn with loathing from the prospect. I know that it can not be more so behind the curtain; and we will raise it together."

"The assurance, Anna, is sweet to my soul, but I would still implore you against this resolution To be undivided even in death conveys a feeling to my heart like rapture, and brings back to it a renewed hope; yet I dare not think of your suffering and pain. I dread the idea of death when it relates to you."

"Think rather, my husband, that I share the hope and the rapture of which you speak. Believe me only, that I joy also in the conviction that in death we shall not be divided. The mere bitter of the draught or the pain of the stroke is not worthy of a thought. The assurance that there will be no interruption in our progress together—that death, with us, will be nothing but a joint setting forth in company on a new journey and into another country—that is worthy of every thought, and should be the only one!"

"Ay, but that country, Anna?"

"Can not be more full of wo and bitter than this hath been to us."

"It may! I have read somewhere, my wife, a vivid description of two fond lovers—fondest among the fond—born, as it were, for each other—devoted, as few have been to one another; who, by some cruel tyrant were thrown into a dungeon, and ordered to perish by the gnawing process of hunger. At first, they smiled at such a doom. They believed that their tyrant lacked ingenuity in his capacity for torture, for he had left them *together!* Together, they were strong and fearless. Love made them light-hearted even under restraint; and they fancied a power of resistance in themselves, so united, to endure the worst forms of torment. For a few days they did so. They cheered each other. They spoke the sweetest, soothing words. Their arms were linked in constant embrace. She hung upon his neck, and he bore her head upon his bosom. Never had they spoken such sweet truths—such dear assurances. Never had their tendernesses been so all-compensating. Perhaps they never had been so truly happy together, at least for the first brief day of their confinement. Their passion had been refined by severity, and had acquired new vigor from the pressure put upon it. But as the third day waned, they ceased to link their arms together. They recoiled from the mutual embrace. They shrunk apart. They saw in each other's eyes, a something rather to be feared than loved. Famine was there, glaring like a wolf. The god was transformed into a demon; and in another day the instinct of hunger proved itself superior to the magnanimous sentiment of love. The oppressor looked in on the fourth day, through the grated-window upon his victims—and lo! the lips of the man were dripping with the blood, drawn from the veins of his beloved one. His teeth were clenched in her white shoulder; and he grinned and growled

above his unconscious victim, even as the tiger, whom you have disturbed ere he has finished with his prey."

"Horrible! But *she* submitted—*she* repined not. Her moans were unheard. *She* sought not, in like manner, to pacify the baser, beastly cravings, at the expense of him she loved. Hers *was* love, Beauchampe—*his* was passion."

"Alas! my wife, what matters it by what name we seek to establish a distinction between the sentiments and passions? In those dreadful extremes of situation, from which our feeble nature recoils, all passions and sentiments run into one. *We* love!—Before Heaven, my wife, I conscientiously say, and as conscientiously believe, that I love you as passionately as I can love, and as truly as woman ever was beloved by man. It is not our love that fails us, in the hour of physical and mental torment. It is our strength. Thought and principle, truth and purity, are poor defences, when the frame is agonized with a torture beyond what nature was intended to endure. Then the strongest man deserts his faith and disavows his principles. Then the purest becomes profligate, and the truest dilates in falsehood. It is madness, not the man, that speaks. It was madness, not the man, that drunk from the blue veins of the beloved one and clenched his dripping teeth in her soft white shoulder. The very superior strength of his blood, was the cause of his early overthrow of reflection. As, in this respect, she was the weaker, so her mind, and consequently, the sweet pure sentiments which were natural to her mind, the longest maintained its and their ascendency, and preserved her from the loathsome frenzy to which the man was driven. Ah, of this future, dear wife! This awful, unknown future! Fancy some penal doom like this—fancy some tiger rage in me—depriving me of the reason, and the sentiments which have made me love you, and made me what I am—fancy, in place of the man, the frenzied beast, raging in his bloody thirst, rending in his savage hunger—drinking the

[illegible] from the beloved one's veins—tearing the flesh from [illegible] soft white shoulder! This thought—this fear, Anna—"

"is neither thought nor fear of mine! God is good and gracious. I am not bold to believe in my own purity of heart, or propriety of conduct. I am a sinner, Beauchampe—a proud, stern, fierce sinner. I feel that I am—I would that I were otherwise, and I pray for Heaven's help to become otherwise—but, sinner as I am, I neither fear nor believe, that such penal dooms are reserved for any degree of sin. The love of physical torture is an attribute with which man has dressed the Deity. As such torture can not be human, so it can not be godlike. I can believe that we may be punished by privation—by denial of trust—by degradation to inferior offices—but it is the brutal imagination that ascribes to God a delight in brutal punishments. Nowhere do we see in nature such a feeling manifested. Life is everywhere a thing of beauty. Smiles are in heaven, sweetness on earth, the winds bring it, the airs breathe it, stars smile it, blossoms store and diffuse it—man, alone, defaces and destroys, usurps, vitiates, and overthrows. It was man, not God, who, in your story, was the oppressor. He made the prison, and thrust the victims into it. It was not God! And shall God be likened to such a monster? What idea can we have of the Deity to whom such characteristics are ascribed!—"

—"I go yet farther," she added, after a pause. "I do not think, even if our sins incur the displeasure of God, that his treatment of us, however harsh, will be meant as punishment. That it will be punishment, I doubt not; but this will be with him a secondary consideration. We are *his* subjects, in *his* world, employed to carry out his various purposes, and set to various tasks. Failing in these, we are set to such as are inferior—perhaps, not employed at all, as being no longer worthy of trust. I can not think of a severer moral infliction. Where all are busy—triumphantly busy—pressing forward in the glorious tasks of a life

which is all soul—to be the only idle spirit—denied to share in any mighty consummation—pitied, but abandoned by the rest—the proffer of service rejected—the sympathy of joint action and enterprise denied—a spirit without wings—a sluggish personification of moral sloth, and that too, in such an empire as *God's own*—in his very sight—millions speeding beneath his eye at his bidding—all bid, all chosen, all beloved but one! Ah! Beauchampe, to a soul like mine—so earnest, so ambitious as mine has been, and is—could there be a worse doom!"

"No, dearest! But the subject is dark, and such speculations may be bold—too bold!"

"Why? Do I disparage God in them? Does it not seem that such a future could alone be worthy of such a present—of such a God, as has made a world so various and so wondrous! methinks, the disparagement is in him who ascribes to the Deity such tastes and passions as preside over the inquisitions and the thousand other plans of mortal torture, which have made man the hateful monster that we so frequently find him."

"Let us speak no more of this, Anna. The subject startles me. It is an awful one!"

Hers was the bolder spirit.

"And should not our thoughts be awful thoughts? What other should we have? The future, alone, is ours—will be ours in a short time. A few hours will bring us to the entrance. A few hours will lift the curtain, and the [illegible] that we may not disobey will command us to enter."

"Not you, Anna—oh! not you! Let me brave it alone. I can not bear to think that you too should be cut off in your youth—with all that vigorous mind—that beauty—that noble heart—all crushed, blighted—now, when blooming brightest—buried in the dust—no more to speak, or sing, or feel.'

"But they do not perish, Beauchampe. I might grow coward—I might cling to this life—could I fancy there

were no other. But this faith is one of my strongest convictions. It is an instinct. No reasoning will reach the point and establish it, if the feeling be not in our heart of hearts. I know that I can not perish quite. I know that I must live; and that poison-draught, or the thrust of this sudden knife, I regard as the plunge which one makes, crossing a frail trembling bridge, or hurrying through some dark and narrow passage. Do not waste the moments, which are so precious, in the vain endeavor to dissuade me from a sworn and settled purpose. Beauchampe, we die together!"

"Lie down by me, Anna. You should sleep—you are fatigued. You must be weary."

"No! I am not weary. At such moments as these we become all soul. We do not need sleep. With the passage of this night we shall never need it again. Think of that, Beauchampe! What a thought it is."

"Terrible!"

"Glorious, rather! Sleep was God's gift to an animal—to restore limbs that could be wearied—to refresh spirits that could be dull! What a godlike feeling to know that we should need it no longer!—no more yawning—no more drowsiness—and that feebleness and blindness, which, without any of the securities of death, has all of its incompetencies—when the merest coward might bind, and the commonest ruffian abuse, and trample on us. Ah! the immunities of death! How numerous—how great! What blindness to talk of its terrors—to shrink from its glorious privileges of unimpeded space—of undiminishing time. Already, Beauchampe, it seems to me as if my wings are growing. I fancy I should not feel any hurt from the knife—perhaps, not even taste the poison on my lips."

"Sit by me, at least, if you will not sleep, Anna."

"I will sit by you, Beauchampe—nay, I wish to do so; but you must promise not to attempt to dispossess me of the knife. I suspect you, my husband."

"Why suspect me?"

"I perceive it in the tones of your voice: I know what you intend. But, believe me, I have taken my resolution from which nothing will move me. Even were you now to deprive me of the weapon, nothing would keep me from it long. I should follow you soon, my husband; and the only effect of present denial would be to deprive me of the pleasure of dying with you!"

"Come to me, my wife! I will not attempt to disarm you. I promise you."

"On your love, Beauchampe?"

"With my full heart, dearest. You shall die with me. It will be a sweet moment instead of a bitter one. For your sake only, my wife, would I have disarmed you—but my selfish desires triumph. I will no longer oppose you."

"Thanks—thanks!"

She sprang to him, and clung to his embrace.

"Will you sleep?" he asked, as her head seemed to sink upon his bosom.

"No, no! I had not thought of that! I thought only of the moment—the moment when we should leave this prison."

"Leave it?"

"By death! I am tired, very tired, of these walls—these walls of life—that keep us in bonds—put us at the mercy of the false and the cruel, the base and the malicious! Oh, my husband, we have tried them long enough!"

"There is time enough!" he said. "I would see the daylight once more."

"You can only see it through those bars."

"Still, I would see it. We can free ourselves a moment after."

Even while they spoke together, Beauchampe sunk into a pleasant slumber. She pillowed his head upon her bosom, but had no feeling or thought of sleep. Through the

grated window she saw a few flitting stars. One by one, they came into her sphere of vision, gleamed a little while, and passed, like the bright, spiritual eyes of the departed dear ones. When she ceased to behold them, then she knew that the day was at hand; and the interval of time between the disappearance of the stars and the approach of dawn, though brief, was dark.

"Such," she mused, "will be that brief period of transition, when, passing from the dim, deceptive starlight of this life, we enter into the perfect day. That will be momentarily dark, perhaps. It must be. There may be a state of childhood—an imperfect consciousness of the things around us—of our own wants—and among these, possibly, a lack of utterance. Strange, indeed, that the inevitable should still be the inscrutable! But of what use the details? The great fact is clear to me. Even now things are becoming clearer while I gaze. My whole soul seems to be one great thought! How strange that he should sleep—so soundly, too—so like an infant! He does not fear death, that is certain; but he loves life. I, too, love life, but it is not this. Oh, of that other! Could I get some glimpses—but this is childish! I shall see it all very soon!"

Beauchampe slept late; and, bearing his head still on her bosom, the sleepless wife did not seek to awaken him. Through the intensity of her thought, she acquired an entire independence of bodily infirmities. The physical nature, completely controlled by the spiritual, was passive at her mood. But the soundness of Beauchampe's sleep, continued, as it was, after day had fairly dawned, awakened her suspicions. She searched for the vial of laudanum where she had seen him place it. It was no longer there. She found it beside him on the couch—it was empty!

But his breathing was not suspended. His sleep was natural, and, while she anxiously bent over him in doubt whether to strike at once, or wait to see what further effects

might be produced on him by the potion, he awakened. His first words at awakening betrayed the still superior feelings of attachment with which he regarded her. His voice was that of exultation:—

"It is over—and we are still together! We are not divided!"

"No! but the hour is at hand!"

"What mean you, my love? I have swallowed the laudanum!—where am I?"

His question was answered as his eyes encountered the bleak walls of his dungeon, and beheld the light through the iron bars of his window.

"God! the poison has failed of its effect!"

His look was that of consternation. Her glance and words reassured him.

"We have still the knife, my husband!"

"Ah! we shall defeat them still!"

CHAPTER XL.

LAST WORDS.

"On the morning of the fifth of June, eighteen hundred and twenty-six," says the chronicle, "the drums were heard beating in the streets of Frankfort, and a vast multitude was hurrying toward the gibbet, which was erected on a hill without the town."

At the sound of this ominous music, and the clamors of that hurrying multitude, Beauchampe smiled sadly.

"Strange, that men should delight in such a spectacle—the cruel death, the miserable exposure, of a fellow-man!—that they should look on his writhings, his distortions, his shame and pain, with composure and desire! It will be cruel to disappoint them, Anna! Will it not?"

"I think not of them, my husband. Oh, my husband, could we crowd the few remaining moments with thoughts of goodness, with prayers of penitence! Oh, that I had not urged you to the death of Stevens!"

"It was right!" he answered sternly. "I tell you, Anna, the wives and daughters of Kentucky will bless the name of Beauchampe!"

"They should, my husband, for your blow has saved many from shame and suffering—has terrified many a wrong-doer from his purpose. But, though right in you to strike, I feel that it was wrong in me to counsel."

"That can not be! Do not speak thus, my wife. Let not our last moments be embittered by reproach. Let us

die in prayer rather. Hark! I hear visiters—voices—some one approaches!"

"It is William Hinkley!" she exclaimed.

The guard was heard about to remove the trap-door. Beauchampe looked up, and, a moment after, he heard his wife sigh deeply. She then spoke to him, faintly but quickly: "Take it, my husband! It is not painful."

He turned to her, while a sudden coldness seized upon his heart. She presented him the knife.

"Have you struck?" he asked, in a husky whisper. The wet blade of the knife, already clotty with the coagulating blood, answered his question.

"Take me in your arms—quickly, quickly, dear husband—do not leave me! I lose you—oh, I lose you!"

"No, never! I come! I am with you. Nothing shall part us. This unites us for ever!"

And, with the words, he struck the fatal blow, laid his lips on hers, and covered her and himself with the blanket.

"This is sweet!" she murmured. "I feel you, but I can not see you, husband. Who is it comes?"

"Calvert!"

The young man descended a moment after. His apprehensions were realized. Margaret Cooper was dying—dying by her own hands.

"Was this well done, Margaret?" he asked reproachfully.

"Ay, William," she answered firmly, but in feeble tones. "It was well done! It could not be otherwise, and I find dying sweeter than living. You will forgive me, William?"

"But God, Margaret?—"

"Ah! pray for me—pray for me!—Husband—I am losing you. I feel you not. This is death!—it was for me—it was all for me! O Beauchampe!—"

"She is gone!" cried the husband.

Calvert, who had assisted to support her, now laid the inanimate form softly upon the couch. He was dumb. But the cry of Beauchampe had drawn the attention of the guard.

"What is this—what's the matter?" he demanded.

"Ha! ha! we laugh at you—we defy you!" was the exclamation of Beauchampe, holding up the bloody knife with which he had inflicted upon himself a second wound. "We have slain ourselves."

"God forbid!" cried the officer, wresting the weapon from the hands of the criminal.

"You are too late, my friend: we shall spoil your sport. You shall enjoy no public agonies of mine to-day."

They brought relief—surgical help—stimulants, and bandages. They succored the fainting man, cruelly kind, in order that the stern sentence of the laws might be carried into effect. The hour of execution, meanwhile, had arrived. They brought him forth in the sight of the assembled crowd. The fresh air revived the dying man—awakening him into full but momentary consciousness. He looked up, and beheld where the windows of some of the neighboring houses were filled with female forms. He lifted his hands to them with a graceful but last effort, while he murmured:—

"Daughters of Kentucky! you, at least, will bless the name of Beauchampe!—"

This was all. He then sunk back, as they strove to lift him into the cart. Before his feet had pressed the felon-vehicle, his eyes closed. He was unconscious of the rest. Earth and its little life was nothing more to him. He had also passed behind the curtain!

And here our narrative might fitly end. We have disposed of those parties whose superior trials and struggles constituted the chief interest of our story. But custom requires something more; and the curiosity of the reader naturally seeks to know what of the fortunes of the subordinates—such of the minor persons of the drama as, by their virtues and good conduct, have established a claim upon our regards. We, perhaps, need to know whether

Ned Hinkley, for example, found his compensative happiness—as he proposed it to himself—in the affections of the fair, simple Sallie Bernard, who had so much commended herself to his love by forbearing all "strong-minded" demonstrations. Well, we may satisfy this curiosity. Ned and Sallie are still in the full enjoyment of life and a vigorous old age, with troops of young Neds and Sallies about them. We are persuaded that neither of them regrets or repents the union which they formed upon such moderate expectations of what was due to each other and the public. As they did not marry to please the public, so have they proved themselves perfectly satisfied with the simple duty of pleasing one another.

Of the mother of Margaret Cooper, the mother of Beauchampe, and his sisters, we know nothing. They wisely sheltered their bleeding hearts in obscurity.

Old Hinkley and his wife, the parents of William Calvert, returned from Mississippi to Kentucky, where they were living, at last advices, with their son. The successful career of the latter has, singularly enough, persuaded the old man to believe that William's religion was not, after all, of so doubtful a character. His own devotions are maintained with the tenacity of his nature; but, as he is satisfied that God approves the virtues whenever he helps the fortunes of the subject—a notion which is exceedingly current among the Pharisaical, whose self-esteem is the chief guardian of their religion, and perhaps its only foe—so he leaves his son to settle his own account with the Deity, contenting himself with an unusually long grace at table, and a frequent voluntary prayer for grace before the family retires for the night.

The good old schoolmaster, who could not be lawyer or politician, though with ambition and endowment enough for both, has been gathered to his fathers. He had reached the ripe old age of eighty-one before he yielded to the sacred slumber. He subsided from life, as the withered leaf

drops from the tree in autumn, without an effort or struggle. He died while he slept, and no doubt in a sweet dream, and with the far-off sounds of angelic music in his ears, full of welcome and rejoicing. He was at peace with the world. His last days were cheered by affectionate cares and the most loving solicitude. All that he beheld and heard was grateful to his matured thoughts and his innocent desires. His pride was unselfish, like his hopes. It was all grounded in the prosperity of another!

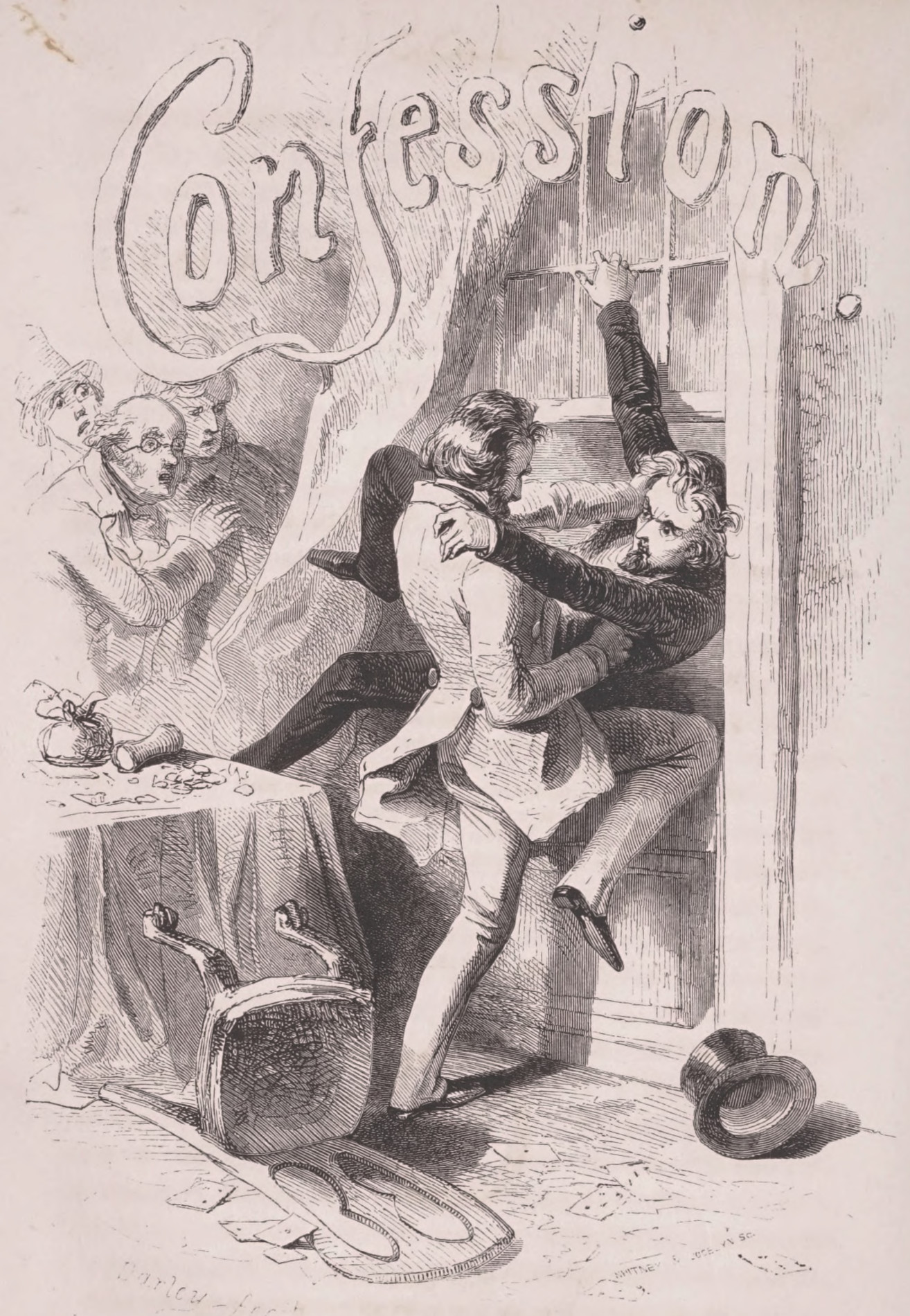
And that other?—

William Calvert continued to prosper. He never married. He still lives, in a green and vigorous old age, in the midst of a noble estate, the fruit of his own well-applied industry and honorable energies. He concentrated all his talents upon his profession, and his profession made him prosperous in turn. His one experiment in politics satisfied all his desires in that direction. For ever after, he steadily refused all connection with political life. He was wont to say that the sacrifice was quite too great for so small an object; and that, while politics in a democracy were admirably calculated to intoxicate and stimulate vanity, they furnished very unwholesome and unsatisfactory food for any real, craving, honest ambition. And he was right. He still lives—lives, as we have said, a bachelor—with lofty frame, erect carriage, fair, round face, benevolent heart, and a calm, sedate mind, always equal to the occasion, and seeking after nothing more. His affections were true to his first and only love; and sometimes, as if speaking to himself rather than those about him, he will mention the name of Margaret Cooper. This will be followed by a deep sigh; and then, as if suddenly remembering himself, he will hurry out of the apartment, and seek refuge in his own.

And thus he still lives, in waiting—and in hope!

Let us drop the curtain.

THE END.


Confession.

CONFESSION

OF

THE BLIND HEART

A DOMESTIC STORY

By W. GILMORE SIMMS, Esq.

AUTHOR OF "GUY RIVERS"—"RICHARD HURDIS"—"BORDER BEAGLES"—"BEAUCHAMPE"—"KATHARINE WALTON"—"THE SCOUT," ETC.

WAGNER. But of the world—the heart, the mind of man
How happy could we know!
FAUST. What can we know?
Who dares bestow the infant his true name?
The few who felt and knew, but blindly gave
Their knowledge to the multitude—they fell!
Incapable to keep their full hearts in,
They, from the first of immemorial time,
Were crucified or burnt.

GOETHE'S FAUST, *MS. Version.*

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INTRODUCTION.

It is, no doubt, a departure from the general laws of Nature, when we exhibit, in a work of art, in fiction, the exercise of any one passion exclusively; when, as in the case of Miss Joanna Baillie, in her "Plays of the Passions," we endeavor to individualize a single passion to the exclusion of all the rest, and seek to build our interest entirely upon the exercise of the one feature, or quality of mind or heart, which we have thus established in this morbid ascendency. Nature does not usually work after this fashion. The passions dwell in groups and families, and there is perpetual play and co-operation between them. One of them may, indeed, exercise a predominating power; but the others are still visibly working, as tributaries—certainly a portion of them—and their presence is to be detected in the general agency; affording that sort of relief to the person in whose fortunes the chief interest lies, without which a passion resolves itself finally into madness. There is little question, indeed, that not only do most madnesses arise from such an absorbed condition of the mind, which thus subjugates all the energies to a single faculty, and compels them in a single direction, and keeps them intensely exercised and sorely straitened; but that all intensity, which throws a single passion

into extreme superiority, for any length of time, so as to leave the rest wholly in abeyance, will so impair the intellectual strength as to render of questionable sanity all the performances of the party while in this condition. That this condition does and must exist occasionally, we know; for we have madness and monomania in the world: but, as it is the policy of neither moralist nor dramatist to select a madman for his hero, so it is false practice in art, and a great mistake, so to individualize a passion until it acts like madness — unless, where we make the character wholly subordinate to the fiction, and use it merely as a part of the inferior agency in bringing about results which are requisite for the large conditions of the story; and even this must be done very judiciously, and without making a too free use of the morbid agency.

I am not sure that I have not erred against my own rule in the tale which follows; but I am sure that I have had no purpose to violate it. Indeed, the form of monomania which I have here sought to delineate, I have endeavored to relieve by shows of other passions — nay, by the free exercise of other passions, and strong ones too — which would, under other circumstances, in the case of an individual trained by a more indulgent fortune, have fully availed to neutralize the one moral plague-spot, which, let to grow, and stimulated in its growth by external pressure, became finally, in the case of my hero, big enough, not only to cover the whole heart, but to impair the vigorous working of an otherwise noble brain. Self-esteem is, here, a passion; ambition, a passion; love, a passion: there are nice sensibilities, an honorable spirit, great gentleness, warm sympathies, and many talents. But the self-esteem, in an ambitious nature, goaded by continual wrong, grows into one of the most jealous of all passions; and, in the case of one equally endowed with a fine heart and noble faculties, it is apt to put on the most subtle as well as the most fiery form of jealousy. The jealousy of self-esteem, by-the-way, is of far greater

intensity than that which springs from mortified affections alone; and this is the source of the diseased development which I here delineate.—Enough, perhaps, on this head, particularly as my object, throughout the tale, has been to make the hero lay bare the secret of his own disease, and, step by step, to exhibit its successive symptoms.

Portions of the following narrative were among the earliest prose-writings of the author. The materials are gathered from facts, in a domestic history, the sources of which he believes to be unquestionable. Some of the events occurred, indeed, under his own observation. Of this early manuscript he had almost lost all recollection, until he happened upon it while exploring the contents of a large mass of similar beginnings of his youth. The reperusal of the fragment possessed his mind so warmly with the subject, that he could not resist the desire to resume it. Attempting to arrange it for the press, he was led away by his own interest in the psychological history; and the work grew beneath his hands to a size far exceeding his original purpose, which contemplated nothing more than the construction of a rapid magazine article.

A work so growing, without design, may be strictly legitimate, as the natural progress of the author's mind to the solutions of his problems, yet fail in every essential, as a work of interest for the reader, or even of art. The mere logical array of facts, distribution and arrangement of the proper relations of parties and events—all these, however well done, may yet constitute no more claim to art than may be urged in behalf of a well-put law argument. The defect in design will most probably be a loss of warmth and color to the picture, to speak in the language of the studio. Such a process of gradual expansion, without heed to the design, is liable to many dangers and objections, in addition to the deficiency already mentioned; not the least of which, in the popular estimation, will be the absence of variety, and the lack of exciting action. To sit down,

day by day, to the labors of the anatomist merely—to bare the nerves, and sinews, and tissues, and limbs, which we should prefer to clothe and color—is apt to become a somewhat dreary, even when an exciting, performance; and this is the danger always of one who, in fiction, works *under the surface*, rejecting those exhibitions of the moods *externally* which supply the performance with its incidents. We prefer the salient action to the contemplation of the silent agony; would rather behold the action than have it described to us; must see Richard writhing upon his couch, even while we listen to his dream; and are apt to feel it somewhat wearisome to trace the secret necessity of the soul, even though, in doing so, we are allowed to pierce its most hidden mysteries. We prefer to hear it cry aloud its agonies, rather than take upon ourselves the labor of seeking them where they lie concealed, and watching the secret struggles by which they are subdued.

To readers, therefore, who are simply in search of incident, and that sort of interest which appeals to the blood rather than the brain, it may be well, by way of caution, and to prevent unreasonable expectation, to say that this "Confession of the Blind Heart" offers very little encouragement. It partakes of few of the features of that school of Dumas, and Reynolds, and Ainsworth, in which the heart is made to roar out its hopes or sufferings, under incessant provocation and stimuli. It has its "disastrous chances;" but with few of those "moving accidents by flood and field"—those "hair-breadth 'scapes i' the imminent deadly breach"—which so richly garnish in general the tales of these popular writers.

Its interest is required to arise from other sources. It contemplates another class of readers. The trials and troubles of the hero are not only those of simple, domestic life, but they are of the sensibilities rather than the blood—diseased sensibilities, where the passions, exciting and erring, develop themselves in faults, vices, and weaknesses, rather than in crimes;

and where, even when crime occurs, it is motiveless as crime, not purposed as crime, but, under a blind judgment, as justice simply. The attempt is made to analyze the heart in some of its obliquities and perversities; to follow its toils, pursue its phases, and to trace, if possible, the secret of its self-deceptions, its self-baffling inconsistencies, its seemingly wilful warfare with reason and the sober experience. This is the simple design of the narrative, which, with great unity of plan and purpose, lacks all the usual varieties of art in prose fiction. It belongs, somewhat, to the class of works which the genius of Godwin has made to triumph in "Caleb Williams," even over a perverse system.

The writer reviews his work, now that it is finished (and now again when he revises its pages for the last time), with many misgivings. He is not blind to the difficulty of describing the struggles of a blind heart—taking that one heart up, almost alone, and making it narrate its own dreary consciousness of wrong-doing, of wrong-enduring, and of equal suffering in both conditions. Perhaps there can be no performance more difficult—none less likely to appeal to the merely popular reader—less likely to be successful, in common opinion, unless with a small and peculiarly-constituted circle. There is no relief to the picture—no background, or it is *all* background—gloomy even with its glare—an ominous shadow hanging like a cloud over the whole, and serving as the curtain which, half the time, conceals the sacrifice. Success, of a popular kind, is rarely possible in any work of fiction where events, which naturally speak for themselves, are mostly rejected from use; where the whole history depends for development upon the silent progress of the thoughts, and sentiments, and emotions—the passions themselves working as under-currents of moods and feelings—moods which look, but speak not, and feelings that boil for ever in fiery fountains, but are never suffered to overflow! A single soul is here selected from the rest, put in bonds, put to the

torture, and made to declare its dreary experience through its groans. It is to suffer, not to act. It has no foil, no assistants; there is no chorus; no other actors are suffered on the scene. Its cry is necessarily a monotone. Its own intensity must supply the absence of exciting action. Can it make itself heard, felt—secure justice, compel sympathy—by this one cry of agony? That is the question. In degree with the intensity of its own agony, its own severe simplicity and truth, its own earnest feeling of sincerity, and the injustice of its suffering under the decree of an ingeniously perverse fate, will be the credence we accord to its appeal. It speaks, or not, to the purpose, as one giving evidence. Perhaps, like the frequent witness in other courts, it may speak some—nay, much—yet not the whole truth. The writer, however, has striven that such should not be the case. He has conducted the cross-examination with a searching scrutiny; and, if any matters of evidence are left unrevealed, the fault is rather in the lawyer than the witness. The courteous reader will be pleased to perceive this fault in neither. In neither—we answer for both—is it wilful.

W. G. S.

WOODLANDS, S. C., *March*, 1856.

CONFESSION,

OR

THE BLIND HEART.

CHAPTER I.

"Who dares bestow the infant his true name?
The few who felt and knew, but blindly gave
Their knowledge to the multitude — they fell
Incapable to keep their full hearts in,
They, from the first of immemorial time,
Were crucified or burnt."—GOETHE'S *Faust.*

THE pains and penalties of folly are not necessarily death. They were in old times, perhaps, according to the text, and he who kept not to himself the secrets of his silly heart was surely crucified or burnt. Though lacking in penalties extreme like these, the present is not without its own. All times, indeed, have their penalties for folly, much more certainly than for crime; and this fact furnishes one of the most human arguments in favor of the doctrine of rewards and punishments in the future state. But these penalties are not always mortifications and trials of the flesh. There are punishments of the soul; the spirit; the sensibilities; the intellect — which are most usually the consequences of one's own folly. There is a perversity of mood which is the worst of all such penalties. There are tortures which the foolish heart equally inflicts and endures. The passions riot on their own nature; and, feeding as they do upon

that bosom from which they spring, and in which they flourish, may, not inaptly, be likened to that unnatural brood which gnaws into the heart of the mother-bird, and sustains its existence at the expense of hers. Meetly governed from the beginning, they are dutiful agents that bless themselves in their own obedience; but, pampered to excess, they are tyrants that never do justice, until at last, when they fitly conclude the work of destruction by their own.

The narrative which follows is intended to illustrate these opinions. It is the story of a blind heart—nay, of blind hearts—blind through their own perversity—blind to their own interests—their own joys, hopes, and proper sources of delight. In narrating my own fortunes, I depict theirs; and the old leaven of wilfulness, which belongs to our nature, has, in greater or less degree, a place in every human bosom.

I was the only one surviving of several sons. My parents died while I was yet an infant. I never knew them. I was left to the doubtful charge of relatives, who might as well have been strangers; and, from their treatment, I learned to doubt and to distrust among the first fatal lessons of my youth. I felt myself unloved—nay, as I fancied, disliked and despised. I was not merely an orphan. I was poor, and was felt as burdensome by those connections whom a dread of public opinion, rather than a sense of duty and affection, persuaded to take me to their homes. Here, then, when little more than three years old, I found myself—a lonely brat, whom servants might flout at pleasure, and whom superiors only regarded with a frown. I was just old enough to remember that I had once experienced very different treatment. I had felt the caresses of a fond mother—I had heard the cheering accents of a generous and a gentle father. The one had soothed my griefs and encouraged my hopes—the other had stimulated my energies and prompted my desires. Let no one fancy that, because I was a child, these lessons were premature. All education, to be valuable, must begin with the child's first efforts at discrimination. Suddenly, both of these fond parents disappeared, and I was just young enough to wonder why.

The change in my fortunes first touched my sensibilities, which it finally excited until they became diseased. Neglected.

if not scorned, I habitually looked to encounter nothing but neglect or scorn. The sure result of this condition of mind was a look and feeling, on my par', of habitual defiance. I grew up with the mood of one who goes forth with a moral certainty that he must meet and provide against an enemy. But I am now premature.

The uncle and aunt with whom I found shelter were what is called in ordinary parlance, very good people. They attended the most popular church with most popular punctuality. They prayed with unction — subscribed to all the charities which had publicity and a fashionable list to recommend them — helped to send missionaries to Calcutta, Bombay, Owyhee, and other outlandish regions — paid their debts when they became due with commendable readiness — and were, in all out-of-door respects, the very sort of people who might congratulate themselves, and thank God that they were very far superior to their neighbors. My uncle had morning prayers at home, and my aunt thumbed Hannah More in the evening; though it must be admitted that the former could not always forbear, coming from church on the sabbath, to inquire into the last news of the Liverpool cotton market, and my aunt never failed, when they reached home, on the same blessed day, to make the house ring with another sort of eloquence than that to which she had listened with such sanctimonious devotion from the lips of the preacher. There were some other little offsets against the perfectly evangelical character of their religion. One of these — the first that attracted my infant consideration — was naturally one which more directly concerned myself. I soon discovered that, while I was sent to an ordinary charity school of the country, in threadbare breeches, made of the meanest material — their own son — a gentle and good, but puny boy, whom their indulgence injured, and, perhaps, finally destroyed — was despatched to a fashionable institution which taught all sorts of *ologies* — dressed in such choice broadcloth and costly habiliments, as to make him an object of envy and even odium among all his less fortunate school-fellows.

Poor little Edgar! His own good heart and correct natural understanding showed him the equal folly of that treatment to which he was subjected, and the injustice and unkindness which

distinguished mine. He strove to make amends, so far as I was concerned, for the error of his parents. He was my playmate whenever he was permitted, but even this permission was qualified by some remark, some direction or counsel, from one or other of his parents, which was intended to let him know, and make me feel, that there was a monstrous difference between us.

The servants discovered this difference as quickly as did the objects of it; and though we were precisely of one age, and I was rather the largest of the two, yet, in addressing us, they paid him the deference which should only be shown to superior age, and treated me with the contumely only due to inferior merit. It was "Master Edgar," when he was spoken to—and "you," when I was the object of attention.

I do not speak of these things as of substantial evils affecting my condition. Perhaps, in one or more respects, they were benefits. They taught me humility in the first place, and made that humility independence, by showing me that the lesson was bestowed in wantonness, and not with the purpose of improvement. And, in proportion as my physical nature suffered their neglect, it acquired strength by the very roughening to which that neglect exposed it. In this I possessed a vast advantage over my little companion. His frame, naturally feeble, sunk under the oppressive tenderness to which the constant care of a vain father, a doting mother, and sycophantic friends and servants, subjected it. The attrition of boy with boy, in the half-manly sports of schoolboy life—its very strifes and scuffles—would have brought his blood into adequate circulation, and hardened his bones, and given elasticity to his sinews. But from all these influences, he was carefully preserved and protected. He was not allowed to run, for fear of being too much heated. He could not jump, lest he might break a blood-vessel. In the ball play, he might get an eye knocked out; and even tops and marbles were forbidden, lest he should soil his hands and wear out the knees of his green breeches. If he indulged in these sports it was only by stealth, and at the fearful cost of a falsehood on every such occasion. When will parents learn that entirely to crush and keep down the proper nature of the young, is to produce inevitable perversity, and stimulate the boyish ingenuity to crime?

With me the case was very different. If cuffing and kicking could have killed, I should have died many sudden and severe deaths in the rough school to which I was sent. If eyes were likely to be lost in the campus, corded balls of India-rubber, or still harder ones of wood, impelled by shinny (goff) sticks, would have obliterated all of mine though they had been numerous as those of Argus. My limbs and eyes escaped all injury; my frame grew tall and vigorous in consequence of neglect, even as the forest-tree, left to the conflict of all the winds of heaven; while my poor little friend, Edgar, grew daily more and more diminutive, just as some plant, which nursing and tendance within doors deprive of the wholesome sunshine and generous breezes of the sky. The paleness of his cheek increased, the languor of his frame, the meagerness of his form, the inability of his nature! He was pining rapidly away, in spite of that excessive care, which, perhaps, had been in the first instance, the unhappy source of all his feebleness.

He died—and I became an object of greater dislike than ever to his parents. They could not but contrast my strength with his feebleness—my improvement with his decline—and when they remembered how little had been their regard for me, and how much for him—without ascribing the difference of result to the true cause—they repined at the ways of Providence, and threw upon me the reproach of it. They gave me less heed and fewer smiles than ever. If I improved at school, it was well, perhaps; but they never inquired, and I could not help fancying that it was with a positive expression of vexation, that my aunt heard, on one occasion, from my teacher, in the presence of some guests, that I was likely to be an honor to the family.

"An honor to the family, indeed!" This was the clear expression in that Christian lady's eyes, as I saw them sink immediately after in a scornful examination of my rugged frame and coarse garments.

The family had its own sources of honor, was the calm opinion of both my patrons, as they turned their eyes upon their only remaining child—a little girl about five years old, who was playing around them on the carpet. This opinion was also mine, even then: and my eyes followed theirs in the same

direction. Julia Clifford was one of the sweetest little fairies in the world. Tender-hearted, and just, and generous, like the dear little brother, whom she had only known to lose, she was yet as playful as a kitten. I was twice her age—just ten—at this period; and a sort of instinct led me to adopt the little creature, in place of poor Edgar, in the friendship of my boyish heart. I drew her in her little wagon—carried her over the brooklet—constructed her tiny playthings—and in consideration of my usefulness, in most generally keeping her in the best of humors, her mother was not unwilling that I should be her frequent playmate. Nay, at such times she could spare a gentle word even to me, as one throws a bone to the dog, who has jumped a pole, or plunged into the water, or worried some other dog, for his amusement. At no other period did my worthy aunt vouchsafe me such unlooked-for consideration.

But Julia Clifford was not my only friend. I had made another shortly before the death of Edgar; though, passingly it may be said, friendship-making was no easy business with a nature such as mine had now become. The inevitable result of such treatment as that to which my early years had been subjected, was fully realized. I was suspicious to the last degree of all new faces—jealous of the regards of the old; devoting myself where my affections were set and requiring devotion—rigid, exclusive devotion—from their object in return. There was a terrible earnestness in all my moods which made my very love a thing to be feared. I was no trifler—I could not suffer to be trifled with—and the ordinary friendships of man or boy can not long endure the exactions of such a disposition. The penalties are usually thought to be—and are—infinitely beyond the rewards and benefits.

My intimacies with William Edgerton were first formed under circumstances which, of all others, are most likely to establish them on a firm basis in our days of boyhood. He came to my rescue one evening, when, returning from school, I was beset by three other boys, who had resolved on drubbing me. My haughty deportment had vexed their self-esteem, and, as the same cause had left me with few sympathies, it was taken for granted that the unfairness of their assault would provoke no censure. They were mistaken. In the moment of my greatest

difficulty, William Edgerton dashed in among them. My exigency rendered his assistance a very singular benefit. My nose was already broken — one of my eyes sealed up for a week's holyday; and I was suffering from small annoyances, of hip, heart, leg, and thigh, occasioned by the repeated cuffs, and the reckless kicks, which I was momently receiving from three points of the compass. It is true that my enemies had their hurts to complain of also; but the odds were too greatly against me for any conduct or strength of mine to neutralize or overcome; and it was only by Edgerton's interposition that I was saved from utter defeat and much worse usage. The beating I had already suffered. I was sore from head to foot for a week after; and my only consolation was that my enemies left the ground in a condition, if anything, something worse than my own.

But I had gained a friend, and that was a sweet recompense, sweeter to me, by far, than it is found or felt by schoolboys usually. None could know or comprehend the force of my attachment — my dependence upon the attachment of which I felt assured! — none but those who, with an earnest, impetuous nature like my own — doomed to denial from the first, and treated with injustice and unkindness — has felt the pang of a worse privation from the beginning; — the privation of that sustenance, which is the "very be all and end all" of its desire and its life — and the denial of which chills and repels its fervor — throws it back in despondency upon itself — fills it with suspicion, and racks it with a never-ceasing conflict between its apprehension and its hopes.

Edgerton supplied a vacuum which my bosom had long felt. He was, however, very unlike, in most respects, to myself. He was rather phlegmatic than ardent — slow in his fancies, and shy in his associations from very fastidiousness. He was too much governed by nice tastes, to be an active or performing youth; and too much restrained by them also, to be a popular one. This, perhaps, was the secret influence which brought us together. A mutual sense of isolation — no matter from what cause — awakened the sympathies between us. Our ties were formed, on my part, simply because I was assured that I should have no rival; and on his, possibly, because he perceived in my haughty reserve of character, a sufficient security that his fas-

tidious sensibilities would not be likely to suffer outrage at my hands. In every other respect our moods and tempers were utterly unlike. I thought him dull, very frequently, when he was only balancing between jealous and sensitive tastes;—and ignorant of the actual, when, in fact, his ignorance simply arose from the decided preference which he gave to the foreign and abstract. He was contemplative—an idealist; I was impetuous and devoted to the real and living world around me, in which I was disposed to mingle with an eagerness which might have been fatal; but for that restraint to which my own distrust of all things and persons habitually subjected me.

CHAPTER II.

BOY PASSIONS—A PROFESSION CHOSEN.

BETWEEN William Edgerton and Julia Clifford my young life and best affections were divided, entirely, if not equally. I lived for no other—I cared to seek, to know, no other—and yet I often shrunk from both. Even at that boyish period, while the heavier cares and the more painful vexations of life were wanting to our annoyance, I had those of that gnawing nature which seemed to be born of the tree whose evil growth "brought death into the world and all our wo." The pang of a nameless jealousy—a sleepless distrust—rose unbidden to my heart at seasons, when, in truth, there was no obvious cause. When Julia was most gentle—when William was most generous—even then, I had learned to repulse them with an indifference which I did not feel—a rudeness which brought to my heart a pain even greater than that which my wantonness inflicted upon theirs. I knew, even then, that I was perverse, unjust; and that there was a littleness in the vexatious mood in which I indulged, that was unjust to my own feelings, and unbecoming in a manly nature. But even though I felt all this, as thoroughly as I could ever feel it under any situation, I still could not succeed in overcoming that insane will which drove me to its indulgence.

Vainly have I striven to account for the blindness of heart—for such it is, in all such cases—which possessed me. Was there anything in my secret nature, born at my birth and growing with my growth—which impelled me to this wilfulness. I can scarcely believe so; but, after serious reflection, am compelled to think that it was the strict result of moods growing out of the particular treatment to which I had been subjected. It does not seem unnatural that an ardent temper of mind, willing to

confide, looking to love and affection for the only aliment which it most and chiefly desires, and repelled in this search, frowned on by its superiors as if it were something base, will, in time, grow to be habitually wilful, even as the treatment which has schooled it. Had I been governed and guided by justice, I am sure that I should never have been unjust.

My waywardness in childhood did not often amount to rudeness, and never, I may safely say, where Julia was concerned. In her case, it was simply the exercise of a sullenness that repelled her approaches, even as its own approaches had been repelled by others. At such periods I went apart, communing sternly with myself, refusing the sympathy that I most yearned after, and resolving not to be comforted. Let me do the dear child the justice to say that the only effect which this conduct had upon her, was to increase her anxieties to soothe the repulsive spirit which should have offended her. Perhaps, to provoke this anxiety in one it loves, is the chief desire of such a spirit. It loves to behold the persevering devotion, which it yet perversely toils to discourage. It smiles within, with a bitter triumph, as it contemplates its own power, to impart the same sorrow which a similar perversity has already made it feel.

But, without seeking further to analyze and account for such a spirit, it is quite sufficient if I have described it. Perhaps, there are other hearts equally froward and wayward with my own. I know not if my story will amend—perhaps it may not even instruct or inform them—I feel that no story, however truthful, could have disarmed the humor of that particular mood of mind which shows itself in the blindness of the heart under which it was my lot to labor. I did not want knowledge of my own perversity. I knew—I felt it—as clearly as if I had seen it written in characters of light, on the walls of my chamber. But, until it had exhausted itself and passed away by its own processes, no effort of mine could have overcome or banished it. I stalked apart, under its influence, a gloomy savage—scornful and sad—stern, yet suffering—denying myself equally, in the perverse and wanton denial to which I condemned all others.

Perhaps something of this temper is derived from the yearnings of the mental nature. It may belong somewhat to the natural direction of a mind having a decided tendency to imagi-

native pursuits. There is a dim, vague, indefinite struggle, for ever going on in the nature of such a person, after an existence and relations very foreign to the world in which it lives; and equally far from, and hostile to that condition in which it thrives. The vague discontent of such a mind is one of the causes of its activity; and how far it may be stimulated into diseased intensity by injudicious treatment, is a question of large importance for the consideration of philosophers. The imaginative nature is one singularly sensitive in its conditions; quick, jealous, watchful, earnest, stirring, and perpetually breaking down the ordinary barriers of the actual, in its struggles to ascertain the extent of the possible. The tyranny which drives it from the ordinary resources and enjoyments of the young, by throwing it more completely on its own, impels into desperate activity that daring of the imaginative mood, which, at no time, is wanting in courage and audacity. My mind was one singularly imaginative in its structure; and my ardent temperament contributed largely to its activity. Solitude, into which I was forced by the repulsive and unkind treatment of my relatives, was also favorable to the exercise of this influence; and my heart may be said to have taken, in turn, every color and aspect which informed my eyes. It was a blind heart for this very reason, in respect to all those things for which it should have had a color of its own. Books and the woods—the voice of waters and of song—the dim mysteries of poetry, and the whispers of lonely forest-walks, which beguiled me into myself, and more remotely from my fellows, were all, so far as my social relations were concerned, evil influences! Influences which were only in part overcome by the communion of such gentle beings as William Edgerton and Julia Clifford.

With these friends, and these only, I grew up. As my years advanced, my intimacy with the former increased, and with the latter diminished. But this diminution of intimacy did not lessen the kindness of her feelings, or the ordinary devotedness of mine. She was still—when the perversity of heart made me not blind—the sweet creature to whom the task of ministering was a pleasure infinitely beyond any other which I knew. But, as she grew up to girlhood, other prospects opened upon her eyes, and other purposes upon those of her parents. At twelve

she was carried by maternal vanity into company — sent to the dancing-school — provided with teachers in music and painting, and made to understand — so far as the actions, looks, and words of all around could teach — that she was the cynosure of all eyes, to whom the whole world was bound in deference.

Fortunately, in the case of Julia, the usual effects of maternal folly and indiscretion did not ensue. Nature interposed to protect her, and saved her in spite of them all. She was still the meek, modest child, solicitous of the happiness of all around her — unobtrusive, unassuming — kind to her inferiors, respectful to superiors, and courteous to, and considerate of all other persons. Her advancing years, which rendered these new acquisitions and accomplishments desirable, if not necessary, at the same time prompted her foolish mother to another step which betrayed the humiliating regard which she entertained for me. When I was seventeen, Julia was twelve, and when neither she nor myself had a solitary thought of love, the over-considerate mother began to think, on this subject, for us both. The result of her cogitations determined her that it was no longer fitting that Julia should be my companion. Our rambles in the woods together were forbidden; and Julia was gravely informed that I was a poor youth, though her cousin — an orphan whom her father's charity supported, and whom the public charity schooled. The poor child artlessly told me all this, in a vain effort to procure from me an explanation of the mystery (which her mother had either failed or neglected to explain) by which such circumstances were made to account for the new commands which had been given her. Well might she, in her simplicity of heart, wonder why it was, that because I was poor, she should be familiar with me no longer.

The circumstance opened my eyes to the fact that Julia was a tall girl, growing fast, already in her teens, and likely, under the rapidly-maturing influence of our summer sun, to be soon a woman. But just then — just when she first tasked me to solve the mystery of her mother's strange requisitions, I did not think of this. I was too much filled with indignation — the mortified self-esteem was too actively working in my bosom to suffer me to think of anything but the indignity with which I was treated. A brief portion of the dialogue between the child and my-

self, will give some glimpses of the blind heart by which I was afflicted.

"Oh, you do not understand it, Julia. You do not know, then, that you are the daughter of a rich merchant—the only daughter—that you have servants to wait on you, and a carriage at command—that you can wear fine silks, and have all things that money can buy, and a rich man's daughter desire. You don't know these things, Julia, eh?"

"Yes, Edward, I hear you say so now, and I hear mamma often say the same things; but still I don't see—"

"You don't see why that should make a difference between yourself and your poor cousin, eh? Well, but it does; and though you don't see it now, yet it will not be very long before you will see, and understand it, and act upon it, too, as promptly as the wisest among them. Don't you know that I am the object of your father's charity—that his bounty feeds me—and that it would not be seemly that the world should behold me on a familiar footing of equality or intimacy with the daughter of my benefactor—my patron—without whom I should probably starve, or be a common beggar upon the highway?"

"But father would not suffer that, Edward."

"Oh, no! no!—he would not suffer it, Julia, simply because his own pride and name would feel the shame and disgrace of such a thing. But though he would keep me from beggary and the highway, Julia, neither he nor your mother would spend a sixpence or make an effort to save my feelings from pain and misery. They protect me from the scorn of others, but they use me for their own."

The girl hung her head in silence.

"And you, too," I added—"the time will come when you, too, Julia, will shrink as promptly as themselves from being seen with your poor relation. You—"

"No! no! Edward—how can you think of such a thing?" she replied with girlish chiding.

"Think it!—I know it! The time will soon be here. But—obey your mother, Julia. Go! leave me now. Begin at once the lesson which, before many days, you will find it very easy to learn."

This was all very manly, so I fancied at the time; and then

blind with the perverse heart which boiled within me, I felt not the wantonness of my mood, and heeded not the bitter pain which I occasioned to her gentle bosom. Her little hand grasped mine, her warm tears fell upon it; but I flung away from her grasp, and left her to those childish meditations which I had made sufficiently mournful.

Subsequent reflection, while it showed me the brutality of my conduct to Julia, opened my eyes to the true meaning of her mother's interdiction; and increased the pang of those bitter feelings, which my conscious dependence had awakened in my breast. It was necessary that this dependence should be lessened; that, as I was now approaching manhood, I should cast about for the future, and adopt wisely and at once the means of my support hereafter. It was necessary that I should begin the business of life. On this head I had already reflected somewhat, and my thoughts had taken their direction from more than one conference which I had had with William Edgerton. His father was an eminent lawyer, and the law had been adopted for his profession also. I determined to make it mine; and to speak on this subject to my uncle. This I did. I chose an afternoon, the very week in which my conversation had taken place with Julia, and, while the dinner things were undergoing removal, with some formality requested a private interview with him. He looked round at me with a raised brow of inquiry—nodded his head—and shortly after rose from the table. My aunt stared with an air of supercilious wonder; while poor Julia, timid and trembling, barely ventured to give me a single look, which said—and that was enough for me—"I wish I dared say more."

My conference with my uncle was not of long duration. I told him it was my purpose—my desire—to begin as soon as possible to do something for myself. His answer signified that such was his opinion also. So far we were agreed; but when I told him that it was my wish to study the law, he answered with sufficient, and as I thought, scornful abruptness:—

"The law, indeed! What puts the law into your head? What preparations have you made to study the law? You know nothing of languages which every lawyer should know—Latin—"

I interrupted him to say that I had some slight knowledge of Latin—sufficient, I fancied, for all legal purposes.

"Ah! indeed! where did you get it?"

"A friend lent me a grammar and dictionary, and I studied myself."

"Oh, you are ambitious; but you deceive yourself. You were never made for a lawyer. Besides, how are you to live while prosecuting your studies? No, no! I have been thinking of something for you, Edward—and, just now, it happens fortunately that old Squire Farmer, the bricklayer, wants some apprentices—"

I could scarcely listen thus far.

"I thank you, sir, but I have no disposition to be a bricklayer."

"You must do something for yourself. You can not expect to eat the bread of idleness. I have done, and will do for you what I can—whatever is necessary;—but I have my own family to provide for. I can not rob my own child——"

"Nor do I expect it, Mr. Clifford," I replied hastily, and with some indignation. "It is my wish, sir, to draw as little as possible from your income and resources. I would not rob Julia Clifford of a single dollar. Nay, sir, I trust before many years to be able to refund you every copper which has been spent upon me from the moment I entered your household."

He said hastily:—

"I wish nothing of that, Edward;—but the law is a study of years, and is expensive and unpromising in every respect. Your clothes already call for a considerable sum, and such a profession requires, more than almost any other, that a student should be well dressed."

"I promise you, sir, that my dress shall be such as shall not trespass upon your income. I shall be governed by as much economy——"

He interrupted me to say, that

"His duty required that his brother's son should be dressed as well as his associates."

I replied, with tolerable composure:—

"I do not think, sir, that bricklaying will admit of very genteel clothing, nor do I think that the vocation will suit me. I have flattered myself, sir, that my talents——"

"Oh, you have talents, then, have you? Well, it is fortunate that the discovery has been made in season."

I bore with this, though my cheek was burning, and said—with an effort to preserve my voice and temper, in which, though the difficulty was great, I was tolerably successful—

"You have misunderstood me in some things, Mr. Clifford; and I will try now to explain myself clearly in others. Having resolved, sir, that the law shall be my profession——"

"Ha! resolved, say you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, go on—go on!"

"Having resolved to pursue the study of law, and seeing that I am burdensome and expensive to you—believing, too, that I can relieve you of the burden—I have simply requested permission of you to make the attempt."

"Why, how do you propose to do so?—how can you support yourself—that is relieve me of the burden of your expenses—and study the law at the same time?"

"Such things have been done, sir; and can be done again. I flatter myself I can do it. Industry will enable me to do so. I propose to apply for a clerkship in a mercantile establishment which I know stands in need of assistance, and while there will pursue my studies in such intervals of leisure as the business will afford me."

"You seem to have the matter ready cut and dry. Why do you come to me, then? Remember, I can make no advances."

"I need none, sir. My simple object with you, sir, was to declare my intention, and to request that I may be permitted to refer to you the merchants to whom I mean to apply, for a knowledge of my character and attainments."

"Oh, certainly, you may—for the character;—but as to the attainments"—with a sneering smile—"of them I can say nothing, and, perhaps, the less said the better. I've no doubt you'll do well enough with the merchants. It does not need much genius or attainment for such situations. But, if you'll take my counsel, you'll go to the bricklayer. We want bricklayers sadly. To be a tolerable lawyer, parts are necessary; and God knows the country is over-stocked with hosts of lawyers already, whose only parts lie in their impudence.

Better think a little while longer. Speak to old Farmer yourself."

I smiled bitterly—thanked him for his counsel, which was only a studied form of insult, and turned away from him without further speech, and with a proud swelling of indignation at my heart. Thus our conference ended. A week after, I was ensconced behind the counter of a wholesale dealer, and my hands at night were already busy in turning over the heavy folios of Chitty and Blackstone.

CHAPTER III.

ADMITTED AMONG THE LAWYERS.

BEHOLD me, then, merchandising by day, and conning by night the intricate mysteries of law. Books for the latter purpose were furnished by my old friend, William Edgerton, from his father's library. He himself was a student, beginning about the same time with myself; though with the superior privilege of devoting himself exclusively to this study. But if he had more time, I was more indefatigable. My pride was roused, and emulation soon enabled me to supply the want of leisure. My nights were surrendered, almost wholly, to my new pursuit. I toiled with all the earnestness which distinguished my temperament, stimulated to a yet higher degree by those feelings of pride and pique, which were resolved to convince my skeptical uncle that I was not entirely without those talents, the assertion of which had so promptly provoked his sneer. Besides, I had already learned that no such scheme as mine could be successfully prosecuted, unless by a stern resolution; and this implied the constant presence of a close, undeviating method in my studies. I tasked myself accordingly to read — understandingly, if possible — so many pages every night, making my notes, queries, doubts, &c., *en passant*. In order to do this, I prescribed to myself a rule, to pass directly from the toils of the day and the store to my chamber, suffering no stoppage by the way, and studiously denying myself the dangerous fascinations of that society which was everywhere at command, in the persons of young men about my own age and condition. The intensity of my character, and the suspiciousness which it induced, helped me in this determination. Perhaps, there is no greater danger to a young man's habits of study and business, than a chat at the street corner, with a merry and thoughtless group. A single half hour con-

sumed in this manner, is almost always fatal to the remaining hours of the day. It breaks into the circle, and impairs the method without which the passage of the sun becomes a very weary and always an unprofitable progress. If you would be a student or anything, you must plunge headlong into it at the beginning — bury yourself in your business, and work your way out of your toils, by sheer, dogged industry.

My labors were so far successful that I could prosecute my studies with independence. I had left the dwelling of my uncle the moment I took employment in the mercantile house. My salary, though small, was ample; with my habits, it was particularly so. I had few of those vices in which young men are apt to indulge, and which, when they become habits, cease unhappily to be regarded as vices. I used tobacco in no shape, and no ardent spirits. I needed no stimulants, and, by the way, true industry never does. It is only indolence that needs drink; and indolence does need it; and the sooner drunkenness kills indolence by the use of drink, the better for society. The only objection to liquors as an agent for ridding the community of a nuisance, is, that it is rather too slow, and too offensive in its detailed operations; arsenic would be far less offensive, more summary, and is far more certain. You would seek vainly to cure drunkenness, unless you first cure the idleness which is its root and strength, and, while they last, its permanent support. But my object is not homily.

If I was free from vices such as these, however, I had vices of my own, which were only less odious as they were less obvious. That vexing, self-tormenting spirit of which I have spoken as the evil genius that dogged my footsteps — that moral perverseness which I have described as the "blind heart" — still afflicted me, though in a far less degree now than when I was the inmate of my uncle's dwelling, and exposed to all the caprices of himself, his wife and servants. I kept on good terms with my employers, for the very natural reason that they saw me attend to my business and theirs, with a hearty cheerfulness that went to work promptly in whatever was to be done, and executed its tasks with steady fortitude, neatness, and rapidity. But, even with them, I had my sulks — my humors — my stubborn fits of sullenness, that seemed anxious to provoke opposi-

tion, and awaken wrath. These, however, they considerately forgave in consideration of my real usefulness: and as they perceived that whatever might have been the unpleasantness occasioned by these specimens of spleen, they were never suffered to interfere with or retard the operations of business. "It's an ugly way he's got," was, probably, the utmost extent of what either of the partners said, and of what is commonly said on such occasions by most persons, who do not care to trouble themselves with a too close inquiry.

Well, at twenty-one, William Edgerton and myself were admitted to the practice of the law, and that too with considerable credit to ourselves. I had long since been carried by my friend into his family circle; and Mr. Edgerton, his father, had been pleased to distinguish me with sundry attentions, which were only grateful to me in consequence of the unusual deference with which his manner evinced his regard. His gentle inquiries and persuasive suggestions beguiled me into more freedom of speech than I had ever before been accustomed to; and his judicious management of my troubled spirit, for a time, stifled its contradictions, and suppressed its habitual tendencies. But it was with some jealousy, and an erectness of manner which was surely ungracious, though, perhaps, not offensive, that I endured and replied to his inquiries into my personal condition, my resources, and the nature of that dependence which I bore to the family of my uncle. When he learned—which he did not from me—in what manner I had pursued my studies—after what toils of the day, and at what late hours of the night—when he found from a close private examination, which he had given me, before my admission, that my knowledge of the law was quite as good as the greater number of those who apply for admission—he was pleased to express his astonishment at my perseverance, and delight at my success. When, too, in addition to this, he discovered, upon a minute inquiry from my employers and others, that I was abstemious, and indulged in no excesses of any kind, his interest in me increased, as I thought, who had been accustomed to nothing of the sort, beyond all reasonable measure—and I soon had occasion to perceive that it was no idle curiosity that prompted his consideration and inquiry.

Without my knowledge, he paid a visit to my uncle. This gentleman, I may be permitted here to say, had been quite as much surprised as anybody else, at my determined prosecution of my studies in spite of the difficulties by which I was surrounded. That I was pursuing them, while in the mercantile establishment to which I had gone, he did not believe; and very frequently when I was at his house—for I visited the family, and sometimes, though unfrequently, dined with them on a sabbath—he jeered me on my progress—the "wonderful progress," as he was pleased to term it—which he felt sure I was making with my Coke and Blackstone, while baling blankets, or bundling up plains and kerseys. This I bore patiently, sustained as I was by the proud, indomitable spirit within me, which assured me of the ultimate triumph which I felt positive would ensue. I enjoyed his surprise—a surprise that looked something like consternation—when the very day of my admission to the bar, and after that event, I encountered him in the street, and in answer to his usual sarcastic inquiry:—

"Well, Edward, how does the law come on? How is Sir William Blackstone, Sir Edward Coke, and the rest of the white heads?"

I simply put the parchment into his hands which declared my formal introduction to those venerable gentry.

"Why, you don't mean? Is it possible? So you really are admitted—a lawyer, eh?"

"You see, sir—and that, too, without any Greek."

"Well, and what good is it to do you? To have a profession, Edward, is one thing; to get business, another!"

"Yes, sir—but I take it, the profession must be had first. One step is gained. That much is sure. The other, I trust, will follow in due season."

"True, but I still think that the bricklayer would make the more money."

"Were money-making, sir, the only object of life, perhaps, then, that would be the most desirable business; but—"

"Oh, I forgot—the talents, the talents are to be considered."

And after the utterance of this sneer, our dialogue as may be supposed, did not much longer continue.

I did not know of the contemplated visit of Mr. Edgerton to

my worthy uncle, nor of its purpose, or I should, most assuredly, have put my veto upon the measure with all the tenacity of a resentful spirit; but this gentleman, who was a man of nice sensibility as well as strong good sense, readily comprehended a portion of my secret history from what was known to him He easily conceived that my uncle was somewhat of a niggard from the manner in which I had employed myself during my preparation for the bar. He thought, however, that my uncle, though unwilling to expend money in the prosecution of a scheme which he did not approve—now that the scheme was so far successful as to afford every promise of a reasonable harvest, could not do less than come forward to the assistance of one who had shown such a determined disposition to assist himself.

He was mistaken. He little knew the man. His interview with my uncle was a short one. The parties were already acquainted, though not intimately. They knew each other as persons of standing in the same community, and this made the opening of Mr. Edgerton's business easy. I state the tenor of the interview as it came to my knowledge afterward.

"Mr. Clifford," he said, "you have a nephew—a young gentleman, who has been recently admitted to the bar—Mr. Edward Clifford."

The reply, with a look of wonder was necessarily affirmative.

"I have had much pleasure," continued the other, "in knowing him for some time. He is an intimate of my eldest son, and from what has met my eyes, sir, I should say, you are fortunate in having a nephew of so much promise."

"Why, yes, sir, I believe he is a clever youth enough," was the costive answer.

"He is more than that, sir. I regard him, indeed, as a most astonishing young man. The very manner in which he has pursued his studies while engaged in the harassing labors of a large wholesale business house of this city—alone establishes this fact."

The cheeks of my uncle reddened. The last sentence of Mr. Edgerton was unfortunate for his object. It conveyed a tacit reproof, which the niggardly conscience of Mr. Clifford readily appropriated and, perhaps, anticipated He dreaded lest Mr. Edgerton knew all.

"You are probably aware, Mr. Edgerton," he replied with equal hesitancy and haste—"you have heard that Edward Clifford is an orphan—that he has nothing, and it was therefore necessary that he should learn to employ himself; though it was against my wish, sir, that he went into a mercantile house."

There was something suppressed in this—a mean evasion—for he could not easily have told Mr. Edgerton, without a blush, that, instead of the mercantile establishment, he would have made me a bricklayer's hodman. But this, it seems, Edgerton had found out for himself. His reply, however, was calculated to soothe the jealous apprehensions of Mr. Clifford. He had an object in view, which he thought too important to risk for the small pleasure of a passing sarcasm.

"Perhaps, it has happened for the best, Mr. Clifford. You were right in requiring the young man to do for himself. Were I worth millions, sir, I should still prefer that my son should learn that lesson—that he should work out his own deliverance with the sweat of his own brow."

"I agree with you, sir, perfectly," replied the other, with increased complacency. "A boy learns to value his money as he should, only when he has earned it for himself."

"Ah! it is not for this object simply," replied Mr. Edgerton, "that I would have him acquire habits of industry; it is for the moral results which such habits produce—the firmness, character, consistency—the strength and independence—temperance, justice—all of which arise, and almost only, from obedience to this law. But it is clear that one can not do everything by himself, and this young man, though he has gone on in a manner that might shame the best of us, is still not so thoroughly independent as he fancies himself. It will be some time before he will be able to realize anything from his profession, and he will need some small assistance in the meantime."

"I can not help him," exclaimed Mr. Clifford, abruptly—"I have not the means to spare. My own family need everything that I can give. He has himself only to blame. He chose his profession for himself. I warned him against it. He needn't send to me."

"Do not mistake me, Mr. Clifford," said Mr. Edgerton, calmly.

"Your nephew knows nothing of my present visit. I would be loath that he should know. It was the singular independence of his mind that led me to the conviction, that he would sooner die than ask assistance from anybody, that persuaded me to suggest to you in what manner you might afford him an almost necessary help, without offending his sensibility."

"Humph!" exclaimed the other, while a sneer mantled upon his lips. "You are very considerate, Mr. Edgerton; but the same sensibilities might prompt him to reject the assistance when tendered."

"No, sir," replied Edgerton, mildly—"I think I could manage that."

"I am sorry, sir, that I can not second your wishes in any material respect," was the answer of my uncle;—"but I will see Edward, and let him know that my house is open to him as it was from the time he was four years old; and he shall have a seat at my table until he can establish himself more to his satisfaction; but money, sir, in truth, I have not a cent to spare. My own necessities——"

"Enough, sir," said Mr. Edgerton, mildly; "I take it for granted, Mr. Clifford, that if you could contribute to the success of your brother's son, you certainly would neither refuse nor refrain to do so."

"Oh, surely—certainly not," replied the other, hastily. "Anything that I could do—anything in reason, sir, I should be very happy to do, but——"

And then followed the usual rigmarole about "his own family," and "hard times," and "diminished resources," and all those stereotype commonplaces which are for ever on the lips of stereotype insincere people. Mr. Clifford did not perceive the dry and somewhat scornful inuendo, which lay at the bottom of Mr. Edgerton's seemingly innocent assumption; and the latter took his leave, vexed with himself at having made the unsuccessful application—but still more angry with the meanness of character which he had encountered in my uncle.

CHAPTER IV.

——"She still soothed
The mock of others."

It is not improbable that, after a few hours given to calm reflection, my uncle perceived how obnoxious he might be made to public censure for his narrow treatment of my claims; and the next day he sent for me in order to tender me the freedom of his house—a tender which he had made the day before to Mr. Edgerton in my behalf. But his offer had been already anticipated by that excellent friend that very day. Coming warm and fresh from his interview with my uncle, he called upon me, and in a very plain, direct, business-like, but yet kind and considerate manner, informed me that he stood very much in need of an assistant who would prepare his papers—did me the honor to say that he fancied I would suit him better than anybody else he knew, and offered me six hundred dollars for my labors in that capacity for the first year of my service. My engagement to him, he said at the same time, did not imply such entire employment as would incapacitate me for the execution of any business which might be intrusted to my hands individually. I was permitted the use of a desk in his office, and was also permitted to hang out my own banner from his window I readily persuaded myself that I could be of service to Mr. Edgerton—such service as would, perhaps, leave my obligation a light one—and promptly acceded to his offer. He had scarcely departed when a servant brought a note from Mr. Clifford. Even while meditating what he fancied was a favor, he could not forbear the usual sneer. The following was his communication:

"Dear Edward: If you can spare a moment from your numerous clients, and are not in a great hurry to make your deposites, you will suffer me to see you at the office before two o'clock.

"Yours affectionately, "J. B. Clifford."

"Very affectionately!" I exclaimed. It might be nothing more than a pleasantry which he intended by the offensive passages in his note; but the whole tenor of his character and conduct forbade this conviction.

"No! no!" I muttered to myself, as the doubt suggested itself to my mind; "no! no! it is the old insolence—the insolence of pride, of conscious wealth—of power, as he thinks, to crush! But he is mistaken. He shall find defiance. Let him but repeat those sarcasms and that sneer which are but too frequent on his lips when he speaks to me, and I will answer him, for the first time, by a narration which shall sting him to the very soul, if he has one!"

This resolution was scarcely made when the image of Julia Clifford—the sweet child—a child now no longer—the sweet woman—interposed, and my temper was subdued of its resolve, though its bitterness remained unqualified.

And what of Julia Clifford? I have said but little of her for some time past, but she has not been forgotten. Far from it. She was still sufficiently the attraction that drew me to the dwelling of my selfish uncle. In the three years that I had been at the mercantile establishment, her progress, in mind and person, had been equally ravishing and rapid. She was no more the child, but the blooming girl—the delicate blossom swelling to the bud—the bud bursting into the flower—but the bloom, and the beauty, and the innocence—the rich tenderness, and the dewy sweet, still remained the same through all the stages of her progress from the infant to the woman. Wealth, and the arrogant example of those about her, had failed to change the naturally true and pure simplicity of her character. She was not to be beguiled by the one, nor misguided by the other, from the exquisite heart which was still worthy of Eden. When I was admitted to the bar at twenty-one, she was sixteen—the age in our southern country when a maiden looks her loveliest. But I had scarcely felt the changes in the last three years which had been going on in her. I beheld beauties added to beauties, charms to charms; and she seemed every day to be the possessor of fresh graces newly dropped from heaven; but there was no change. Increased perfection does not imply change, nor does it suffer it.

It was my custom, as the condescending wish of my uncle

expressed, that I should take my Sunday dinner with his family. I complied with this request, and it was no hard matter to do so. But it was a sense of delight, not of duty, that made me comply; and, but for Julia, I feel certain that I should never have darkened the doors, which opened to admit me only through a sense of duty. But the attraction—scarcely known to myself—drew me with singular punctuality; and I associated the privilege which had been accorded me with another. I escorted the ladies to church; sometimes, too, when the business of my employers permitted, I spent an evening during the week with the family; and beholding Julia I was not over-anxious to perceive the indifference with which I was treated by all others.

But let me retrace my steps. I subdued my choler so far as to go, with a tolerable appearance of calmness if not humility, to the interview which my uncle had been pleased to solicit. I need not repeat in detail what passed between us. It amounted simply to a supercilious offer, on his part, of lodging and board, until I should be sufficiently independent to open the oyster for myself. I thanked him with respect and civility, but, to his surprise, declined to accept his offer.

"Why, what do you propose to do?" he demanded.

"Do what I have been doing for the three past years; work for myself, and pay my board from the proceeds of my own labor."

"What, you go back to the merchants, do you? You are wiser than I thought. The law would not give you your bread here for twenty years in this city."

"You are mistaken, uncle," I said, good humoredly—"it is from the law that I propose to get my bread."

"Indeed!—You are even more sanguine than I thought you. But, pray, upon what do you base your expectations?—the talents, I suppose."

I felt the rankling of this well-known and offensive sneer, but replied simply to the point:—

"No, sir, upon assurances which you will probably think far more worthy of respect. I have already been employed by Mr. Edgerton as an attorney, at a salary of six hundred dollars."

"Ah, indeed! Well, you are a fortunate fellow, I must say, to get such a he'ping hand at the outset. But you may want some

small amount to begin with—you can not draw upon Mr. Edgerton before services are rendered, and if fifty or a hundred dollars, Edward——"

"I thank you, sir;—so far from wanting money, I should be almost able to lend some. I have saved some two hundred from my mercantile salary"

I enjoyed the ghastly grin which rose to his features. It was evident that he was not pleased that I should be independent. He had set out with the conviction, when my father died, that my support and education would devolve upon him, and though they did not, yet it was plain enough to me that he was not unwilling that such should be the impression of the community. I had disarmed him entirely by the simplest process, and, mortified at being disappointed, he was disposed to hate the youth who had baffled him. It was the strangest thing in the world that such should be the feeling of any man, and that, too, in reference to so near a relation; but the case is nevertheless true. I saw it in his looks that moment—I felt it in his accents. I *knew* that such was the real feeling in his soul. There are motives which grow from vanities, piques, rivalries, and the miserable ostentations of a small spirit, which act more terribly upon the passions of man, than even the desire of gain or the love of woman. The heart of Mr. Clifford, was, after its particular fashion, a blind heart, like my own.

"Well, I am glad you are so well off. You will dine with us on Sunday, I suppose?"

My affirmative was a matter of course; and, on Sunday, the evident gratification of Julia when she saw me, amply atoned for all her father's asperities and injustice. She had heard of my success—and though in a sneer from the lips of her father it was not the less productive of an evident delight to her. She met me with the expression of this delight upon all her features.

"I am so glad, so very glad, and so surprised, too, Cousin Edward, at your success. And yet you kept it all to yourself. You might have told *me*, at least, that you were studying law. Why was it that I was never allowed to know of your intention?"

"Your father knew it, Julia."

'Yes, so he says now. He says you told him something

about it when you first went into a store; but he did not think you in earnest."

"Not in earnest! He little knew me, Julia."

"But your telling him, Edward, was not telling me. Why did you not tell me?"

"You might not have kept my secret, Julia. You know what naughty things are said of your sex, touching your inability to keep a secret."

"Naughty things, indeed—naughty and untrue! I'm sure, I should have kept your secret, if you desired it. But why should it be a secret?"

"Why, indeed!" I muttered, as the shadow of my perverseness passed deeply over my heart. "Why, unless to protect myself from the sneers which would stifle my ambition, and the sarcasm which would have stung my heart."

"But you have no fear of these from me, Cousin Edward," she said gently, and with dewy eyes, while her fingers slightly pressed upon my wrist.

"I know not that, Cousin Julia, I somehow suspect everything and everybody now. I feel very lonely in the world—as if there was a destiny at work to make my whole life one long conflict, which I must carry on without sympathy or succor."

"Oh, these are only notions, Edward."

"Notions!" I exclaimed, giving her a bitter smile as I spoke, while my thoughts reverted to the three years of unremitting and almost uncheered labor through which I had passed.

"Yes, notions only, Cousin Edward. You are full of such notions. You every now and then start up with a new one; and it makes you gloomy and discontented—"

"I make no complaints, Julia."

"No, that is the worst of it. You make no complaints, I think, because you do not wish to be cured of them. You prefer nursing your supposed cause of grief, with a sort of solitary pleasure—the gratification of a haughty spirit, that is too proud to seek for solace, and to find it."

Julia had in truth touched upon the true nature of my misanthropy—of that self-vexing and self-torturing spirit, which too effectually blinds the heart.

"But could I find it, Julia?" I asked, looking into her eyes with an expression which I began to feel was something very new to mine.

"Perhaps—I think—you could," was the half-tremulous answer, as she beheld the peculiar expression of my glance. The entrance of Mrs. Clifford, was, perhaps, for the first time, rather a relief to us both.

"And so you are a lawyer, Edward? Well, who would have thought of it? It must be a very easy thing to be made a lawyer."

Julia looked at me with eyes that reddened with vexation. I felt my gorge rising; but when I reflected upon the ignorance, and the unworthy nature of the speaker, I overcame the disposition to retort, and smilingly replied:—

"It's not such hard work as bricklaying, certainly."

"Ah," she answered, "if it were only half so profitable. But Mr. Clifford says that a lawyer now is only another name for a beggar—a sort of genteel beggar. The town's overrun with them—half of them live upon their friends."

"I trust I shall not add to the number of this class, Mrs. Clifford."

"Oh, no! I know *you* never will, Cousin Edward," exclaimed Julia, with a flush upon her cheeks at her own temerity.

"Really, Julia," said her mother, "you are very confident. How do you know anything about it?"

The sharp glances of rebuke which accompanied this speech daunted the damsel for a moment, and her eyes were suddenly cast in confusion upon the ground; but she raised them with boldness a moment after, as she replied:—

"We have every assurance, mother, for what I say, in the fact that Cousin Edward has been supporting himself at another business, while actually pursuing the study of law for these three years; and that very pride about which father spoke to-day, is another assurance—"

"Bless my stars, child, you have grown very pert on a sudden, to talk about guaranties and assurances, just as if you was a lawyer yourself. The next thing we hear, I suppose, will be that instead of being busy over the 'Seven Champions' and the last fashions, you, too, will be turning over the leaves of big

law-books, and carrying on such studies in secret to surprise a body, as if there was any merit or good in doing such things secretly."

Julia felt that she had only made bad worse, and she hung her head in silence. For my part, though I suppressed my choler, the pang was only the more keenly felt for the effort to hide it. In my secret soul, I asked, "Will the day never come when I, too, will be able to strike and sting?" I blushed an instant after, at the small and mean appetite for revenge that such an inquiry implied. But I came to the support of Julia.

"Let me say, Mrs. Clifford, that I think—nay, I know—that Julia is right in her conjecture. The guaranty which I have given to my friends, by the pride and industry which I have shown, should be sufficient to convince them what my conduct shall be hereafter. I know that I shall never trespass upon their feelings or their pockets. They shall neither blush for nor lose by their relationship with Edward Clifford."

"Well said! well spoken! with good emphasis and proper action. Forrest himself could scarce have done it better!"

Such was the exclamation of Mr. Clifford, who entered the room at this moment. His mock applause was accompanied by a clamorous clapping of his hands. I felt my cheeks burn, and my blood boil. The truth is, I was not free from the consciousness that I had suffered some of the grandiloquent to appear in my manner while speaking the sentence which had provoked the ridicule of my uncle. The sarcasm acquired increase of sting in consequence of its being partially well-merited. I replied with some little show of temper, which the imploring glances of Julia did not altogether persuade me to suppress. The "blind heart" was growing stronger within me, from the increasing conviction of my own independence. In this sort of mimic warfare the day passed off as usual. I attended the family to church in the afternoon, took tea, and spent the evening with them—content to suffer the "stings and arrows"—however outrageous, of my exemplary and Christian aunt and uncle, if permitted to enjoy the presence and occasional smiles of the true angel, whose influence could still temper my feelings int a humane and patient toleration of influences which they yet burned to trample under foot.

CHAPTER V.

DEBUT.

A BRIEF interval now passed over, after my connection begun with Mr. Edgerton, in which time the world went on with me more smoothly, perhaps, than ever. My patron—for so this gentleman deserves to be called—was as indulgent as I could wish. He soon discerned the weaknesses in my character, and with the judgment of an old practitioner, he knew how to subdue and soften, without seeming to perceive them. I need not say that I was as diligent and industrious, and not less studious, while in his employ, than I had been in that of my mercantile acquaintance. The entire toils of the desk soon fell upon my shoulders, and I acquired the reputation among my small circle of acquaintance, of being a very good attorney for a young beginner. It is true, I was greatly helped by the continued perusal of an admirable collection of old precedents, which a long period of extensive practice had accumulated in the collection of my friend. But to be an attorney, simply, was not the bound of my ambition. I fancied that the forum was, before all others, my true field of exertion. The ardency of my temper, the fluency of my speech, the promptness of my thought, and the warmth of my imagination, all conspired in impressing on me the belief that I was particularly fitted for the arena of public disputation. This, I may add, was the opinion of Mr. Edgerton also; and I soon sought an occasion for the display of my powers.

It was the custom at our bar—and a custom full of danger—for young beginners to take their cases from the criminal docket. Their "'prentice han'," was usually exercised on some wretch from the stews, just as the young surgeon is permitted to hack the carcass of a tenant of the "Paupers' Field," the

better to prepare him for practice on living and more worthy victims. Was there a rascal so notoriously given over to the gallows that no hope could possibly be entertained of his extrication from the toils of the evidence, and the deliberations of a jury, he was considered fair game for the young lawyers, who, on such cases, gathered about him with all the ghostly and keen propensities of vultures about the body of the horse cast out upon the commons.

The custom was evil, and is now, I believe, abandoned. It led to much irreverence among thoughtless young men—to an equal disregard of that solemnity which should naturally attach to the court of justice, and to the life of the prisoner arraigned before it. A thoughtless levity too frequently filled the mind of the young lawyer and his hearers, when it was known that the poor wretch on trial was simply regarded as an agent, through whose miserable necessity, the beginner was to try his strength and show his skill in the art of speech-making. It was my fortune, acting rather in compliance with the custom than my own preference, to select one of these victims and occasions for my debut. I could have done otherwise. Mr. Edgerton freely tendered to me any one of several cases of his own, on the civil docket, in which to make my appearance; but I was unwilling to try my hand upon a case in which the penalty of ill success might be a serious loss to my friend's client, and might operate to the injury of his business; and, another reason for my preference was to be found—though not expressed by me—in the secret belief which I entertained that I was peculiarly gifted with the art of appealing to the passions, and the sensibilities of my audience.

Having made my determination, I proceeded to prepare myself by a due consideration of the case at large; the history of the transaction, which involved the life of my client—(the allegation was for murder)—and of the testimony of the witnesses so far as it had been suggested in the *exparte* examination before the grand jury. I reviewed the several leading principles on the subject of the crime; its character, the sort of evidence essential to conviction, and certainly, to do myself all justice, as effectually prepared myself for the duties of the trial as probably any young man of the time and community

was likely to have done. The case, I need not add, was hopelessly against me; the testimony conclusive; and I had nothing to do but to weigh its character with keen examination, pick out and expose its defects and inconsistencies, and suggest as plausible a presumption in favor of the accused, as could be reasonably made out from the possibilities and doubts by which all human occurrences are necessarily attended. Something, too, might be done by judicious appeals to the principle of mercy, assuming for the jury a discretion on this subject which, by the way, they have no right to exercise.

I was joined in the case by my friend, young Edgerton. So far our boyish fortunes had run together, and he was not unwilling, though against his father's counsel, to take the same occasion with me for entering the world in company. The term began; the case was one of the last on the criminal docket, and the five days which preceded that assigned for the trial, were days, I am constrained to confess, of a thrilling and terrible agitation to my mind. I can scarcely now recall the feelings of that week without undergoing a partial return of the same painful sensations. My soul was striving as with itself, and seeking an outlet for escape. I panted, as if for breath — my tongue was parched — my lips clammy — my voice, in the language of the poet, clove to the roof of my throat. Altogether, I have never felt such emotions either before or since.

I will not undertake to analyze them, or account for those conflicting sensations which make us shrink, with something like terror, from the very object which we desire. At length the day came, and the man; attended by his father, William Edgerton, and myself, took our places, and stood prepared for the issue. I looked round me with a dizzy feeling of uncertainty. Objects appeared to swim and tremble before my sight. My eyes were of as little service to me then as if they had been gazing to blindness upon the sun. Everything was confused and imperfect. I could see that the courthouse was filled to overflowing, and this increased my feebleness. The case was one that had occasioned considerable excitement in the community, It was one of no ordinary atrocity. This was a sufficient reason why the audience should be large. There

was yet another. There were two new debutants. In a community where popular eloquence is, of all others, perhaps the most desirable talent, this circumstance was well calculated to bring many listeners. Besides, something was expected from both Edgerton and myself. We had not reached our present position without making for ourselves a little circle, in which we had friends to approve and exult, and enemies to depreciate, and condemn.

The proceedings were at length opened by the attorney-general, the witnesses examined, and turned over to us for cross-examination. This part of the duty was performed by my associate. The business fairly begun, my distraction was lessened. My mind, driven to a point, made a decisive stand; and the sound of Edgerton's voice, as he proposed his questions, served still more to dissipate my confusion. I furnished him with sundry questions, and our examination was admitted to be quite searching and acute. My friend went through his part of the labor with singular coolness. He was in little or no respect excited. He, perhaps, was deficient in enthusiasm. If there was no faltering in what he said, there was no fine phrensy. His remarks and utterance were subdued to the plainest demands of the subject. They were shrewd and sensible, not particularly ingenious, nor yet deficient in the proper analysis of the evidence. He acquitted himself creditably.

It was my part to reply to the prosecuting attorney; but when I rose, I was completely confounded. Never shall I forget the pang of that impotence which seemed to overspread my frame, and to paralyze every faculty of thought and speech. I was the victim to my own ardor. A terrible reaction of mind had taken place, and I was prostrated. The desire to achieve greatness — the belief that it was expected from me — the consciousness that hundreds of eyes were then looking into mine with hungering expectation, overwhelmed me! I felt that I could freely have yielded myself for burial beneath the floor on which I stood. My cheeks were burning, yet my hands were cold as ice, and my knees tottered as with an ague. I strove to speak, however; the eyes of the judge met mine, and they looked the language of encouragement — of pity. But this expression only increased my confusion. I stammered out noth-

ing but broken syllables and incoherent sentences. What I was saying, I know not—how long I presented this melancholy spectacle of imbecility to the eyes of my audience, I know not. It may have been a few minutes only. To me it seemed an age; and I was just endued with a sufficient power of reflection to ask myself whether I had not better sit down at once in irreversible despair, when my wandering and hitherto vacant eyes caught a glance—a single glance—of a face opposite.

It was that of my uncle! He was perched on one of the loftiest benches, conspicuous among the crowd—his eyes keenly fixed upon mine, and his features actually brightened by a smile of triumphant malice and exultation.

That glance restored me. That single smile brought me strength. I was timid, and weak, and impotent no longer. Under the presence of habitual scorn, my habitual pride and independence returned to me. The tremors left my limbs. The clammy huskiness which had loaded my tongue, and made it cleave to the roof of my mouth, instantly departed; and my whole mind returned to my control as if beneath the command of some almighty voice. I now saw the judge distinctly—I could see the distinct features of every juryman; and with the pride of my restored consciousness, I retorted the smile upon my uncle's face with one of contempt, which was not without its bitterness.

Then I spoke, and spoke with an intenseness, a directness of purpose and aim—a stern deliberateness—a fire and a feeling—which certainly electrified my hearers with surprise, if with no more elevated emotions. That one look of hostility had done more for my mind than could have been effected in my behalf by all the kind looks and encouraging voices of all the friends in creation.

After a brief exordium, containing some general propositions on the subject of human testimony, which meant no more than to suggest the propriety of giving to the prisoner the benefit of what was doubtful and obscure in the testimony which had been taken against him—I proceeded to compare and contrast its several parts. There were some inconsistencies in the evidence which enable me to make something of a case. The character of the witnesses was something more than doubtful,

and that, too, helped, in a slight degree, my argument. This was rapid, direct, closely wound together, and proved—such was the opinion freely expressed by others, afterward—that I had the capacity for consecutive arrangement of facts and inferences in a very remarkable degree. I closed with an appeal in favor of that erring nature, which, even in our own cases, led us hourly to the commission of sins and errors; and which, where the individual was poor, wretched, and a stranger, under the evil influences of destitution, vicious associations, and a lot in life, which, of necessity, must be low, might well persuade us to look with an eye of qualified rebuke upon his offences.

This was, of course, no argument, and was only to be considered the natural close of my labors. Before I was half through I saw my uncle rise from his seat, and hastily leave the court-room; and then I knew that I was successful—that I had triumphed, through that stimulating influence of his hate, over my own fears and feebleness. I felt sure that the speech must be grateful to the rest of my hearers, which *he* could not stay to hear; and in this conviction, the tone of my spirits became elevated—the thoughts gushed from me like rain, in a natural and unrestrainable torrent of language—my voice was clear and full, far more so than I had ever thought it could be made—and my action far more animated, perhaps, than either good taste or the occasion justified. The criminal was *not* acquitted; but both William Edgerton and myself were judged to have been eminently successful.

The result of my début, in other respects, was flattering far beyond my expectations. Business poured in upon me. My old employers, the merchants, were particularly encouraging and friendly. They congratulated me warmly on my success, assured me that they had always thought I was better calculated for the law than trade; and ended by putting into my hands all their accounts that needed a legal agency for collection. Mr. Edgerton was loud in his approbation, and that very week saw his son and myself united in co-partnership, with the prospect of an early withdrawal of the father from business in our favor. Indeed, the latter gave us to understand that his only purpose now was to see us fairly under way, with a sufficient knowledge of the practice, and assured of the confidence

of his own friends, in order to give his years and enfeebled health a respite from the toils of the profession.

My worthy uncle, true to himself, played a very different part from these gentlemen. He hung back, forbore all words on the subject of my début, and of the promising auspices under which my career was begun, and actually placed certain matters of legal business into the hands of another lawyer. Of this, he himself gave me the first information in very nearly this language :—

"I have just had to sue Yardle & Fellows, and a few others, Edward, and I thought of employing you, but you are young, and there may be some legal difficulties in the way :—but when you get older, and arrive at some experience, we will see what can be done for you."

"You are perfectly right, sir," was my only answer, but the smile upon my lips said everything. I saw, then, that *he could not smile.* He was now exchanging the feeling of scorn which he formerly entertained for one of a darker quality. Hate was the necessary feeling which followed the conviction of his having done me wilful injustice—not to speak of the duties left undone, which were equally his shame.

There were several things to mortify him in my progress. His sagacity as a man of the world stood rebuked—his conduct as a gentleman—his blood as a relation, who had not striven for the welfare and good report of his kin, and who had suffered unworthy prejudices, the result of equal avarice and arrogance, to operate against him.

There is nothing which a base spirit remembers with so much malignant tenacity as your success in his despite. Even in the small matter just referred to, the appropriation of his law business, the observant fates gave me my revenge. By a singular coincidence of events, the very firm against which he had brought action the day before were clients of Mr. Edgerton. That gentleman was taken with a serious illness at the approach of the next court, and the business of their defence devolved upon his son and myself; and finally, when it was disposed of, which did not happen till near the close of that year, it so happened that I argued the case; and was successful.

Mr. Clifford was baffled, and you may judge the feeling with which he now regarded me. He had long since ceased to jest with me and at my expense. He was now very respectful, and I could see that his dislike grew daily in strict degree with his deference. But the deportment of Mr. Clifford—springing as it did from that devil, which each man is supposed to carry at times in his bosom, and of whose presence in mine at seasons I was far from unaware—gave me less annoyance than that of another of his household. Julia, too, had put on an aspect which, if not that of coldness, was at least, that of a very marked reserve. I ascribed this to the influence of her parents—perhaps, to her own sense of what was due to their obvious desires—to her own feeling of indifference—to any and every cause but the right one.

There were other circumstances to alarm me, in connection with this maiden. She was, as I have said, singularly beautiful; and, as I thought, until now, singularly meek and considerate. Her charms, about which there could be no two opinions, readily secured her numerous admirers, and when these were strengthened by the supposed fortune of which she was to be the heiress, the suitors were, some of them, almost as pressing, after the fashion of the world in which we lived, as those of Penelope. I now no longer secured her exclusive regard at the evening fireside or in our way to church. There were gallants on either hand—gay, dashing lads, with big whiskers, long locks, and smart ratans, upon whom madame, our lady-mother, looked with far more complacency than upon me. The course of Julia, herself, was, however, unexceptionable. She was singularly cautious in her deportment, and, if reserved to me. the most jealous scrutiny -after due reflection—never enabled me to discover that she was more lavish of her regards to any other. But the discovery of her position led me to another discovery which the reader will wonder, as I did myself, that I had not made before. This was the momentous discovery that my heart was irretrievably lost to her—that I loved her with all the intensity of a first passion, which, like every other passion in my heart, was absorbing during its prevalence. I could name my feelings to myself only when I perceived that such feelings were entertained by others;—only when I found

that the prize, which I desired beyond all others, was likely t be borne away by strangers, did I know how much it was desirable to myself.

The discovery of this affection instantly produced its natural effects as well upon my deportment as upon my feelings; and that sleepless spirit of suspicion and doubt—that true creature and consequence of the habitual distrust which my treatment from boyhood had instilled into my mind—at once rose to strength and authority within me, and swayed me even as the blasts of November sway the bald tops of the slender trees which the gusts have already denuded of all foliage. The change in Julia's deportment, of which I have already spoken, increased the febrile fears and suspicions which filled my soul and overcame my judgment. She too—so I fancied—had learned to despise and dislike me, under the goading influences of her father's malice and her mother's silly prejudices. I jumped to the conclusion instantly, that I was bound to myself to assert my superiority, my pride and independence, in such a manner, as most effectually to satisfy all parties tha their hate or love was equally a matter of indifference.

You may judge what my behavior was after this. For a time, at least, it was sufficiently unbecoming. The deportment of Julia grew more reserved than ever, and her looks more grave. There was a sadness evidently mingled with this gravity which, amid all the blindness of my heart, I could not help but see. She became sadder and thinner every day; and there was a wo-begone listlessness about her looks and movements which began to give me pain and apprehension. I discovered, too after a while, that some apprehensions had also crept into the minds of her parents in respect to her health. Their looks were frequently addressed to her in evident anxiety. They restrained her exercises, watched the weather when she proposed to go abroad, strove in every way to keep her from fatigue and exposure; and, altogether, exhibited a degree of solicitude which at length had the effect of arousing mine.

Involuntarily, I approached her with more tenderness than my vexing spirit had recently permitted me to show; but I recoiled from the effects of my own attentions. I was vexed to perceive that my approaches occasioned a start, a flutter—a

shrinking inward—as if my advance had been obtrusive, and my attempts at familiarity offensive.

I was then little schooled in the intricacies of the female heart. I little conjectured the origin of that seemingly paradoxical movement of the mind, which, in the case of one, sensitive and exquisitely delicate, prompts to flight from the very pursuit which it would yet invite; which dreads to be suspected of the secret which it yet most loves to cherish, and seeks to protect, by concealment, the feelings which it may not defend; even as the bird hides the little fledglings of its care from the hunter, whom it dare not attack.

Stupid, and worse than stupid, my blind heart saw nothing of this, and perverted what it saw. I construed the conduct of Julia into matter of offence, to be taken in high dudgeon and resolutely resented; and I drew myself up stiffly when she appeared, and by excess of ceremonious politeness only, avoided the reproach of brutality. Yet, even at such moments, I could see that there was a dewy reproach in her eyes, which should have humbled me, and made me penitent. But the effects of fifteen years of injudicious management were not to be dissipated in a few days even by the Ithuriel spells of love. My sense of independence and self-resource had been stimulated to a diseased excess, until, constantly on the *qui vive*, it became dogged and inflexible. It was a work of time to soften me and make me relent; and the labor then was one of my own secret thoughts, and unbiased private decision. The attempt to persuade or reason me into a conviction was sure to be a failure.

Months passed in this manner without effecting any serious change in Julia, or in bringing us a step nearer to one another. Meanwhile, the sphere of my observation and importance increased, as the circle of my acquaintance became extended. I was regarded as a rising young man, and one likely to be successful ultimately in my profession. The social privileges of my friends, the Edgertons, necessarily became mine; and it soon occurred that I encountered my uncle and his family in circles in which it was somewhat a matter of pride with him to be permitted to move. This, as it increased my importance in his sight, did not diminish his pains. But he treated me

now with constant deference, though with the same unvarying coldness. When in the presence of others, he warmed a little. I was then "his nephew;" and he would affect to speak with great familiarity on the subject of my business, my interests, the last case in which I was engaged, and so forth—the object of which was to persuade third persons that our relations were precisely as they should be, and as people would naturally suppose them.

At all these places and periods, when it was my lot to meet with Julia, she was most usually the belle of the night. A dozen attendants followed in her train, solicitous of all her smiles, and only studious how to afford her pleasure. I, only, stood aloof—I, who loved her with a more intense fervor than all, simply because I had none, or few besides to love. The heart which has been evermore denied, will always burn with this intensity. Its passion, once enkindled, will be the all-absorbing flame. Devoted itself, it exacts the most religious devotion; and, unless it receives it, recoils upon its own resources, and shrouds itself in gloom, simply to hide its sufferings from detection.

I affected that indifference to the charms of this maiden, which no one of human sensibilities could have felt. Opinions might have differed in respect to her beauty; but there could be none on the score of her virtues and her amiability, and almost as few on the possessions of her mind. Julia Clifford, though singularly unobtrusive in society, very soon convinced all around her that she had an excellent understanding, which study had improved, and grace had adorned by all the most appropriate modes of cultivation. Her steps were always followed by a crowd—her seat invariably encircled by a group to itself. I looked on at a distance, wrapped up in the impenetrable folds of a pride, whose sleeves were momently plucked, as I watched, by the nervous fingers of jealousy and suspicion. Sometimes I caught a timid glance of her eye, addressed to the spot where I stood, full of inquiry, and, as I could not but believe, of apprehension;—and yet, at such moments, I turned perversely from the spot, nor suffered myself to steal another look at one, all of whose triumphs seemed made at my expense.

On one of these occasions we met—our eyes and hands, accidentally; and, though I, myself, could not help starting back with a cold chill at my heart, I yet fancied there was something monstrous insulting in the evident recoil of her person from the contact with mine, at the same moment. I was about to turn hurriedly away with a slight bow of acknowledgment, when the touching tenderness of her glance, so full of sweetness and sadness, made me shrink with shame from such a rudeness. Besides, she was so pale, so thin, and really looked so unwell, that my conscience, in spite of that blind heart whose perversity would still have kept me to my first intention, rebuked me, and drove me to my duty. I approached—I spoke to her—and my words, though few, under the better impulses of the moment, were gentle and solicitous, as they should have been. My tones, too, were softened:—wilfully as I still felt, I could not forbear the exercise of that better ministry of the affections which was disposed to make amends for previous misconduct. I do not know exactly what I said—I probably did nothing more than utter the ordinary phrases of social compliment;—but everything was obliterated from my mind in an instant, by the startling directness of what was said by her. Looking at me with a degree of intentness by which, alone, she was, perhaps, able to preserve her seeming calmness, she replied by an inquiry as remote from what my observation called for as possible, yet how applicable to me and my conduct!

"Why do you treat me thus, Edward? Why do you neglect me as you do—as if I were a stranger, or, at least, not a friend? What have I done to merit this usage from one who——"

She did not finish the sentence, but her reproachful eyes, full of a dewy suffusion that seemed very much like tears, appeared to conclude it thus—

"One who—used to love me!"

So different was this speech from any that I looked for—so different from what the usage of our conventional world would have seemed to justify—so strange for one so timid, so silent usually on the subject of her own griefs, as Julia Clifford—that I was absolutely confounded. Where had she got this courage? By what strong feeling had it been stimulated? Had I

been at that time as well acquainted with the sex as I have grown since, I must have seen that nothing but a deep interest in my conduct and regard, could possibly have prompted the spirit of one so gentle and shrinking, to the utterance of so searching an appeal. And in what way could I answer it? How could I excuse myself? What say, to justify that cold, rude indifference to a relative, and one who had ever been gentle and kind and true to me. I had really nothing to complain of. The vexing jealousies of my own suspicious heart had alone informed it to its perversion; and there I stood — dumb, confused, stupid — speaking, when I did speak, some incoherent, meaningless sentences, which could no more have been understood by her than they can now be remembered by me. I recovered myself, however, sufficiently soon to say, before we were separated by the movements of the crowd:—

"I will come to you to-morrow, Julia. Will you suffer me to see you in the morning, say at twelve?"

"Yes, come!" was all her answer; and the next moment the harsh accents of her ever-watchful mother warned us to risk no more.

CHAPTER VI.

DENIAL AND DEFEAT.

My sleep that night was anything but satisfactory. I had feverish dreams, unquiet slumbers, and woke at morning with an excruciating headache. I was in no mood for an explanation such as my promise necessarily implied, but I prepared my toilet with particular care—spent two hours at my office in a vain endeavor to divert myself, by a resort to business, from the conflicting and annoying sensations which afflicted me, and then proceeded to the dwelling of my uncle.

I was fortunate in seeing Julia without the presence of her mother. That good lady had become too fashionable to suffer herself to be seen at so early an hour. Her vanity, in this respect, baffled her vigilance, for she had her own apprehensions on the score of my influence upon her daughter. Julia was scarcely so composed in the morning as she had appeared on the preceding night. I was now fully conscious of a flutter in her manner, a flush upon her face, an ill-suppressed apprehension in her eyes, which betokened strong emotions actively at work. But my own agitation did not suffer me to know the full extent of hers. For the first time, on her appearance, did I ask myself the question—"For what did I seek this interview?" What had I to say—what hear? How explain my conduct—my coldness? On what imaginary and unsubstantial premises base the neglect in my deportment, amounting to rudeness, of which she had sufficient reason and a just right to complain? When I came to review my causes of vexation, how trivial did they seem. The reserve which had irritated me, on her part, now that I analyzed its sources, seemed a very natural reserve, such as was only maidenly and becoming. I now recollected that she was no longer a child—no longer the lively

little fairy whom I could dandle on my knee and fling upon my shoulder, without a scruple or complaint. I stood like a trembling culprit in her presence. I was eloquent only through the force of a stricken conscience.

"Julia!" I exclaimed when we met, "I have come to make atonement. I feel how rude I have been, but that was only because I was very wretched."

"Wretched, Edward!" she exclaimed with some surprise. "What should make you wretched?"

"You—you have made me wretched."

"Me!" Her surprise naturally increased.

"Yes, you, dear Julia, and you only."

I took her hand in mine. Mine was burning—hers was colder than the icicles. Need I say more to those who comprehend the mysteries of the youthful heart. Need I say that the tongue once loosed, and the declaration of the soul must follow in a rush from the lips. I told her how much I loved her;—how unhappy it made me to think that others might bear away the prize; that, in this way, my rudeness arose from my wretchedness, and my wretchedness only from my love. I did not speak in vain. She confessed an equal feeling, and we were suffered a brief hour of unmitigated happiness together.

Surely there is no joy like that which the heart feels in the first moment when it gives utterance to its own, and hears the avowed passion of the desired object:—a pure flame, the child of sentiment, just blushing with the hues of passion, just budding with the breath and bloom of life. No sin has touched the sentiment;—no gross smokes have risen to involve and obscure the flame; the altar is tended by pure hands; white spirits; and there is no reptile beneath the fresh blossoming flowers which are laid thereon. The grosser passions sleep, like the fumes at the shrine of Apollo, beneath the spell of that master passion in whose presence they can only maintain a subordinate existence. I loved; I had told my love;—and I was loved in return. I trembled with the deep intoxication of that bewildering moment; and how I found my way back to my office—whom I saw on the way, or to whom I spoke, I know not. I loved;—I was beloved. He only can conceive the delirium of this sweet knowledge who has passed a life like

mine—who has felt the frowns and the scorn, and the contempt of those who should have nurtured him with smiles—whose soul, ardent and sensitive, has been made to recoil cheerlessly back on itself—denied the sunshine of the affections, and almost forbade to hope. Suddenly, when I believed myself most destitute, I had awakened to fortune—to the realization of desires which were beyond my fondest dreams. I, whom no affection hitherto had blessed, had, in a moment, acquired that which seemed to me to comprise all others, and for which all others might have been profitably thrown away.

I fancied now that henceforth my sky was to be without a cloud. I did not—nor did Julia imagine for a moment that any opposition to our love could arise from her parents. What reason now could they have to oppose it? There was no inequality in our social positions. My blood had taken its rise from the same fountains with her own. In the world's estimation my rank was quite as respectable as that of any in my uncle's circle, and, for my condition, my resources, though small, were improving daily, and I had already attained such a place among my professional brethren, as to leave it no longer doubtful that it must continue to improve. My income, with economy—such economy as two simple, single-minded creatures, like Julia and myself, were willing to employ—would already yield us a decent support. In short, the idea of my uncle's opposition to the match never once entered my head. Yet he did oppose it. I was confounded with his blunt, and almost rugged refusal.

"Why, sir, what are your objections?"

He answered with sufficient coolness.

"I am sorry to refuse you, Edward, but I have already formed other arrangements for my daughter. I have designed her for another."

"Indeed, sir—may I ask with whom?"

"Young Roberts—his father and myself have had the matter for some time in deliberation. But do not speak of it, Edward—my confidence in you, alone, induces me to state this fact."

"I am very much obliged to you, sir;—but you do not surely mean to force young Roberts upon Julia, if she is unwilling?"

"Ah, she will not be unwilling. She's a dutiful child, who

will readily recognise the desires of her parents as the truest wisdom."

"But, Mr. Clifford—you forget that Julia has already admitted to me a preference—— "

"So you tell me, Edward, and it is with regret that I feel myself compelled to say that I wholly disapprove of your seeking my daughter's consent, before you first thought proper to obtain mine. This seems to me very much like an abuse of confidence."

"Really, sir, you surprise me more than ever. Now that you force me to speak, let me say that, regarding myself as of blood scarcely inferior to that of my cousin, I can not see how the privilege of which I availed myself in proposing for her hand, can be construed into a breach of confidence. I trust, sir, that you have not contemplated your brother's son in any degrading or unbecoming attitude."

"No, no, surely not, Edward; but mere equality of birth does not constitute a just claim, by itself, to the affections of a lady."

"I trust the equality of birth, sir, is not impaired on my part by misconduct—by a want of industry, capacity—by inequalities in other respects—"

"And talents!"

He finished the sentence with the ancient sneer. But I was now a man—a strong one, and, at this moment particularly a stern one.

"Stop, sir," I retorted; "there must be an end to this. Whether you accede to my application or not, sir, there is nothing to justify you in an attempt to goad and mortify my feelings. I have proffered to you a respectful application for the hand of of your daughter, and though I were poorer, and humbler, and less worthy in all respects than I am, I should still be entitled to respectful treatment. At another time, with my sensibilities less deeply interested than they are, I should probably submit, as I have already frequently submitted, to the unkind and ungenerous sarcasms in which you have permitted yourself to indulge at my expense. But my regard for your daughter alone would prompt me to resent and repel them now. The object of my interview with you is quite too sacred—too solemnly invested

—to suffer me to stand silently under the scornful usage even of her father."

All this may have been deserved by Mr. Clifford, but it was scarcely discreet in me. It gave him the opportunity which, I do not doubt, he desired—the occasion which he had in view. It afforded him an excuse for anger, for a regular outbreak between us, which, in some sort, yielded him that justification for his refusal, without which he would have found it a very difficult matter to account for or excuse. We parted in mutual anger, the effect of which was to close his doors against me, and exclude me from all opportunities of interview with Julia, unless by stealth. Even then, these opportunities were secured by my artifice, without her privity. As dutiful as fond, she urged me against them; and, resolute to "honor her father and mother" in obedience to those holy laws without a compliance with which there is little hope and no happiness, she informed me with many tears that she was now forbidden to see me, and would therefore avoid every premeditated arrangement for our meeting. I did not do justice to her character, but reproached her with coldness—with a want of affection, sensibility, and feeling.

"Do not say so, Edward—do not—do not! I cold—I insensible—I wanting in affection for you! How, how can you think so?" And she threw herself on my bosom and sobbed until I began to fancy that convulsions would follow.

We separated, finally, with assurances of mutual fidelity—assurances which, I knew, from the exclusiveness of all my feelings, my concentrative singleness of character, and entire dependence upon the beloved object of those affections which were now the sole solace of my heart, would not be difficult for me to keep. But I doubted *her* strength—*her* resolution—against the pressing solicitations of parents whom she had never been accustomed to withstand. But she quieted me with that singular earnestness of look and manner which had once before impressed me previous to our mutual explanation. Like vulgar thinkers generally, I was apt to confound weakness of frame and delicacy of organization with a want of courage and moral resources of strength and consolation.

"Fear nothing for my truth, Edward. Though, in obedience

to my parents, I shall not marry against their will, be sure I shall never marry against my own."

"Ah, Julia, you think so, but—"

"I know so, Edward. Believe nothing that you hear against me or of me, which is unfavorable to my fidelity, until you hear it from my own lips."

"But you will meet me again—soon?"

"No, no, do not ask it, Edward. We must not meet in this manner. It is not right. It is criminal."

I had soon another proof of the decisive manner in which my uncle seemed disposed to carry on the war between us. Erring, like the greater number of our young men, in their ambitious desire to enter public life prematurely, I was easily persuaded to become a candidate for the general assembly. I was now just twenty-five—at a time when young men are not yet released from the bias of early associations, and the unavoidable influence of guides, who are generally blind guides. Until thirty, there are few men who think independently; and, until this habit is acquired—which, in too many cases, never is acquired—the individual is sadly out of place in the halls of legislation. It is this premature disposition to enter into public life, which is the sole origin of the numberless mistakes and miserable inconsistencies into which our statesmen fall; which cling to their progress for ever after, preventing their performances, and baffling them in all their hopes to secure the confidence of the people. They are broken-down political hacks in the prime of life, and just at the time when they should be first entering upon the duties of the public man. Seduced, like the rest, as well by my own vanity as the suggestions of favoring friends, I permitted my name to be announced, and engaged actively in the canvass. Perhaps the feverish state of my mind, in consequence of my relations with Julia Clifford and her parents, made me more willing to adopt a measure, about which, at any other time, I should have been singularly slow and cautious. As a man of proud, reserved, and suspicious temper, I had little or no confidence in my own strength with the people; and defeat would be more mortifying than success grateful to a person of my pride. I fancied, however, that popular life would somewhat subdue the consuming passions which were rioting

within my bosom; and I threw myself into the thick of the struggle with all the ardor of a sanguine temperament.

To my surprise and increased vexation, I found my worthy uncle striving in every possible way, without actually declaring his purpose, in opposing my efforts and prospects. It is true he did not utter my name; but he had formed a complete ticket, in which my name was not; and he was toiling with all the industry of a thoroughgoing partisan in promoting its success. The cup which he had commended to my lips was overrunning with the gall of bitterness. *Hostility* to me seemed really to have been a sort of monomania with him from the first. How else was this wanton procedure to be accounted for? how, even with this belief, could it be excused? His conduct was certainly one of those mysteries of idiosyncracy upon which the moral philosopher may speculate to doomsday without being a jot the wiser.

If his desire was to baffle me, he was successful. I was defeated, after a close struggle, by a meagre majority of seven votes in some seventeen hundred; and the night after the election was declared, he gave a ball in honor of the successful candidates, in which his house was filled to overflowing. I passed the dwelling about midnight. Music rang from the illuminated parlor. The merry dance proceeded. All was life, gayety, and rich profusion. And Julia! even then she might have been whirling in the capricious movements of the dance with my happy rival — she as happy — unconscious of him who glided like some angry spectre beneath her windows, and almost within hearing of her thoughtless voice.

Such were my gloomy thoughts — such the dark and dismal subjects of my lonely meditations. I did the poor girl wrong. That night she neither sung nor danced; and when I saw her again, I was shocked at the visible alteration for the worse which her appearance exhibited She was now grown thin, almost to meagreness; her cheeks were very wan, her lips whitened, and her beauty greatly faded in consequence of her suffering health.

Yet, will it be believed that, in that interview, though such was her obvious condition, my perverse spirit found the language of complaint and suspicion more easy than that of devo-

tion and tenderness. I know that it would be easy, and feel that it would be natural, to account for and to excuse this brutality, by a reference to those provocations which I had received from her father. A warm temper, ardent and glowing, it is very safe to imagine, must reasonably become soured and perverse by bad treatment and continual injury. But this for me was no excuse. Julia was a victim also of the same treatment, and in far greater degree than myself, as she was far less able to endure it. Mine, however, was the perverseness of impetuous blood — unrestrained, unchecked — having a fearful will, an impetuous energy, and, gradually, with success and power, swelling to the assertion of its own unqualified dominion — the despotism of the blind heart.

Julia bore my reproaches until I was ashamed of them. Her submission stung me, and I loved then too ardently not to arrive in time at justice, and to make atonement. Would I had made it sooner! When I had finished all my reproaches and complainings, she answered all by telling me that the affair with young Roberts had been just closed, and she hoped finally, by her unqualified rejection of his suit, even though backed by all her father's solicitations, complaints, nay, threats and anger. How ungenerous and unmanly, after this statement had been made, appeared all the bitter chidings in which I had indulged! I need not say what efforts I made to atone for my precipitation and injustice; and how easily I found forgiveness from one who knew not how to harbor unkindness — and if she even had the feeling in her bosom, entertained it as one entertains his deadliest foe, and expelled it as soon as its real character was discovered.

CHAPTER VII.

TEMPTATION.

THUS stood the affair between my fair cousin and myself—a condition of things seriously and equally affecting her health and my temper—when an explosion took place, of a nature calculated to humble my uncle and myself, if not in equal degree, or to the same attitude, at least to a most mortifying extent in both cases. I have not stated before—indeed, it was not until the affair which I am now about to relate had actually exploded, that I was made acquainted with any of the facts which produced it—that, prior to my father's death, there had been some large business connections between himself and my uncle. In those days secret connections in business, however dangerous they might be in social, and more than equivocal in moral respects, were considered among the legitimate practices of tradesmen. What was the particular sort of relations existing between my father and uncle, I am not now prepared to state, nor is it absolutely necessary to my narrative. It is enough for me to say that an exposure of them took place, in part, in consequence of some discoveries made by my father's unsatisfied creditors, by which the obscure transactions of thirty years were brought to light, or required to be brought to light; and in the development of which, the fair business fame of my uncle was likely to be involved in a very serious degree—not to speak of the inevitable effects upon his resources of a discovery and proof of fraudulent concealment. The reputation of my father must have suffered seriously, had it not been generally known that he left nothing—a fact beyond dispute from the history of my own career, in which neither goods nor chattels, lands nor money, were suffered to enure to my advantage.

The business was brought to me. The merchant who brought it, and who had been busy for some years in tracing out the testimony, so far as it could be procured, gave me to understand that he had determined to place it in my hands for two reasons: firstly, to enable me to release the memory of my father from the imputation — under any circumstances discreditable — of bankruptcy, by compelling my uncle to disgorge the sums which he had appropriated, and which, as was alleged, would satisfy all my father's creditors; and, secondly, to give me an opportunity of revenging my own wrongs upon one, of whose course of conduct toward me the populace had already seen enough, during the last election, to have a tolerably correct idea.

I examined the papers, thanked my client for his friendly intentions, but declined taking charge of the case for two other reasons. My relations to the dead and to the living were either of them sufficient reasons for this determination. I communicated the grounds of action, in a respectful letter, to my uncle, and soon discovered, by the alarm which he displayed in consequence, that the cause of the complaint was in all probability good. The case belonged to the equity jurisdiction, and the relator soon filed his bill.

My uncle's tribulation may be conjectured from the fact that he called upon me, and seemed anxious enough to bury the hatchet. He wished me to take part in the proceedings — insisted, somewhat earnestly, and strove very hard to impress me with the conviction that my father's memory demanded that I should devote myself to the task of meeting and confounding the creditor who thus, as it were, had set to work to rake up the ashes of the dead; but I answered all this very briefly and very dryly:—

"If my father has participated in this fraud, he has reaped none of its pleasant fruits. He lived poor, and died poor. The public know that; and it will be difficult to persuade them, with a due knowledge of these facts, that he deliberately perpetrated such unprofitable villany. Besides, sir, you do not seem to remember that, if the claim of Banks, Tressell, & Sons, is good, it relieves my father's memory of the only imputation that now lies against it — that of being a bankrupt."

"Ay!" he cried hoarsely, "but it makes me one — me, your uncle."

"And what reason, sir, have I to remember or to heed this relationship?" I demanded sternly, with a glance beneath which he quailed.

"True, true, Edward, your reproach is a just one. I have not been the friend I should have been; but — let us be friends, now, and hereafter — we must be friends. Mrs. Clifford is very anxious that it should be so — and — and — Edward," solemnly, "you must help me out of this business. You must, by Heaven, you must — if you would not have me blow my brains out!"

The man was giving true utterance to his misery — the fruit of those pregnant fears which filled his mind.

"I would do for you, sir, whatever is proper for me to do, but can not meddle in this unless you are prepared to make restitution, which I should judge to be your best course."

"How can you advise me to beggar my child? This claim, if recognised, will sweep everything. The interest alone is a fortune. I can not think of allowing it. I would rather die!"

"This is mere madness, Mr. Clifford; your death would not lessen the difficulty. Hear me, sir, and face the matter manfully. You must do justice. If what I understand be true, you have most unfortunately suffered yourself to be blinded to the dishonor of the act which you have committed; you have appropriated wealth which did not belong to you, and, in thus doing, you have subjected the memory of my father to the reproach of injustice which he did not deserve. I will not add the reproach which I might with justice add, that, in thus wronging the father's memory, and making it cover your own improper gains, you have suffered his son to want those necessaries of education and sustenance, which—"

"Say no more, Edward, and it shall all be amended. Listen to me now; but stay — close that door for a moment — there! — Now, look you."

And, having taken these precautionary steps, the infatuated man proceeded to admit the dishonest practices of which he had been guilty. His object in making the confession, however, was not that he might make reparation. Far from it. It was rather to save from the clutch of his creditors, from the

grasp of justice, his ill-gotten possessions. I have no patience in revealing the schemes by which this was to be effected; but, as a preliminary, I was to be made the proprietor of one half of the sum in question, and the possessor of his daughter's hand; in return for which I was simply to share with him in the performance of certain secret acts, which, without rendering his virtue any more conspicuous, would have most effectually eradicated all of mine.

"I have listened to you, Mr. Clifford, and with great difficulty. I now distinctly decline your proposals. Not even the bribe, so precious in my sight, as that which you have tendered in the person of your daughter, has power to tempt me into hesitation. I will have nothing to do with you in this matter. Restore the property to your creditors."

"But, Edward, you have not heard;—your share alone will be twenty odd thousand dollars, without naming the interest!"

"Mr. Clifford, I am sorry for you. Doubly sorry that you persist in seeing this thing in an improper light. Even were I disposed to second your designs, it is scarcely possible, sir, that you could be extricated. The discovery of those papers, and the extreme probability that Hansford, the partner of the English firm of Davis, Pierce, & Hansford, is surviving, and can be found, makes the probabilities strongly against you. My advice to you, is, that you make a merit of necessity;—that you endeavor to effect a compromise before the affair has gone too far. The creditors will make some concessions sooner than trust the uncertainties of a legal investigation, and whether you lose or gain, a legal investigation is what you should particularly desire to avoid. If you will adopt this counsel, I will act for you with Banks & Tressel: and if you will give me *carte blanche*, I think I can persuade them to a private arrangement by which they will receive the principal in liquidation of all demands. This may be considered a very fair basis for an arrangement, since the results of the speculation could only accrue from the business capacities of the speculator, and did not belong to a fund which the proprietor had resolved not to appropriate, and which must therefore, have been entirely unproductive. I do not promise you that they will accept, but it is not improbable. They are men of business—they need, at

this moment, particularly, an active capital; and have had too much knowledge of the doubts and delays attending a prolonged suit in equity, not to listen to a proposition which yields them the entire principal of their claim."

I need not repeat the arguments and entreaties by which I succeeded in persuading my uncle to accede to the only arrangement which could possibly have rescued him from the public exposure which was impending; but he did consent, and, armed with his credentials, I proceeded to the office of Banks & Tressell, without loss of time.

Though resolved, if I could effect the matter, that my uncle should liquidate their claim to the uttermost farthing which they required, it was my duty to make the best bargain which I could, in reference to his unfortunate family. Accordingly, without suffering them to know that I had *carte blanche*, I simply communicated to them my wish to have the matter arranged without public investigation—that I was persuaded from a hasty review which I had given to the case, that there were good grounds for action;—but, at the same time, I dwelt upon the casualties of such a course—the possibility that the chief living witness—if he were living—might not be found, or might not survive long enough—as he was reputed to be very old—for the purposes of examination before the commission;—the long delays which belonged to a litigated suit, in which the details of a mixed foreign and domestic business of so many years was to be raked up, reviewed and explained; and the further chances, in the event of final success, of the property of the debtor being so covered, concealed, or made away with, as to baffle at last all the industry and labors of the creditor.

The merchants were men of good sense, and estimated the proverb—"a bird in hand is worth two in the bush"—at its true value. It did not require much argument to persuade them to receive a sum of over forty thousand dollars, and give a full discharge to the defendant; and I flattered myself that the matter was all satisfactorily arranged, and had just taken a seat at my table to write to Mr. Clifford to this effect, when, to my horror, I receive a note from that gentleman, informing me of his resolve to join issue with the claimants, and "maintain his *rights* (?) to the last moment." He thanked me, in very cold

consequential style, for my "*friendly* efforts"—the words italicised, as I have now written it;—but concluded with informing me that he had taken the opinion of older counsel, which, though it might be less correct than mine, was, perhaps, more full of promise for his interests.

This note justified me in calling upon the unfortunate gentleman. It is true I had not committed him to Banks & Tressell—the suggestions which I had made for the arrangement were all proposed as a something which I might be able to bring about in a future conference with him—but I was too anxious to save him from his lamentable folly—from that miserable love of money, which, overreaching itself in its blindness, as does every passion—was not only about to deliver him to shame but to destitution also.

I found him in Mrs. Clifford's presence. That simple and silly woman had evidently been made privy to the whole transaction, so far as my arguments had been connected with it;—for *all* the truth is not often to be got out of the man who means or has perpetrated a dishonesty. She had been alarmed at the immense loss of money, and consequently of importance, with which the family was threatened; and without looking into, or being able to comprehend the facts as they stood, she had taken ground against any measure which should involve such a sacrifice. Her influence over the weak man beside her, was never so clear to me as now; and in learning to despise his character more than ever, I discovered, at the same time, the true source of many of his errors and much of his misconduct. She did not often suffer him to reply for himself—yielded me the ultimatum from her own lips; and condescended to assure me that she could only ascribe the advice which I had given to her husband, to the hostile disposition which I had always entertained for herself and family. That I was "a wolf in sheep's clothing, *she* had long since been able to see, though all others unhappily seemed blind."

Here she scowled at her husband, who contented himself with walking to and fro, playing with his coatskirts, and feeling, no doubt, a portion of the shame which his miserable bondage to this silly woman necessarily incurred.

"Mr. Clifford has got a lawyer who can do for him what it

seems you can not," was her additional observation. "He promises to get him to dry land, and save him without so much as wetting his shoes, though his own blood relations, who are thought so smart, can not, it appears, do anything."

Of course I could have nothing to say to the worthy lady, but my expostulations were freely urged to Mr. Clifford.

"You, at least," said I, "should know the risks which you incur by this obstinacy. Mrs. Clifford can not be expected to know; and I now warn you, sir, that the case of Banks & Tressell is a very strong one, very well arranged, and so admirably hung together, in its several links of testimony, that, even the absence of old Hansford (the chief witness), should his answers never be obtained, would scarcely impair the integrity of the evidence. In a purely moral point of view, nothing can be more complete than it is now."

"Well, and who would it convict, Mr. Edward Clifford?" exclaimed the inveterate lady, anticipating her husband's answer with accustomed interference; "who would it convict, if not your own father? It was as much his business as my husband's; and if there's any shame, I'm sure his memory and his son will have to bear their share of it; and this makes it so much more wonderful to me that you should take sides against Mr. Clifford, instead of standing up in his defence."

"I would save him, madam, if you and he would let me," I exclaimed with some indignation. "Your reference to my father's share in this transaction does not affect me, as it is very evident that you are not altogether acquainted with the true part which he had in it. He had all the risk, all the loss, all the blame—and your husband all the profit, all the importance. He lived poor, and died so; without a knowledge of those profitable results to his brother of which the latter has made his own avails by leaving my father's memory to aspersion which he did not deserve, and his son to destitution and reproach which he merited as little. My father's memory is liable to no reproach when every creditor knows that he died in a state of poverty, in which his only son has ever lived. Neither he nor I ever shared any of the pleasant fruits, for which we are yet to be made accountable."

"And whose fault was it that you didn't get your share.

I'm sure Mr. Clifford made you as handsome an offer yesterday as any man could desire. Didn't he offer you half? But I suppose nothing short of the whole would satisfy so ambitious a person."

"Neither the half nor the whole will serve me, madam, in such a business. My respect for your husband and his family would, of itself, have been sufficient to prevent my acceptance of his offer."

"But there was Julia, too, Edward!" said Mr. Clifford, approaching me with a most insinuating smile.

"It is not yet too late," said Mrs. Clifford, unbending a little. "Take the offer of Mr. Clifford, Edward, and be one of us; and then this ugly business——"

"Yes, my dear Edward, even now, though I have spoken with young Perkins about the affair, and he tells me there's nothing so much to be afraid of, yet, for the look of the thing, I'd rather that you should be seen acting in the business. As it's so well known that your father had nothing, and you nothing, it'll then be easy for the people to believe that nothing was the gain of any of us; and—and——"

"Young Perkins may think and say what he pleases, and you are yourself capable of judging how much respect you may pay to his opinion. Mine, however, remains unchanged. You will have to pay this money—nay, this necessity will not come alone. The development of all the particulars connected with the transaction will disgrace you for ever, and drive you from the community. Even were I to take part with you, I do not see that it would change the aspect of affairs. So far from your sharing with me the reputation of being profitless in the affair, the public would more naturally suspect that I had shared with you—now, if not before—and the whole amount involved would not seduce me to incur this imputation."

"But my daughter—Julia——"

"Do not speak of her in this connection, I implore you, Mr. Clifford. Let her name remain pure, uncontaminated by any considerations, whether of mere gain or of the fraud which the gain is supposed to involve. Freely would I give the sum in question, were it mine, and all the wealth besides that I ever expect to acquire, to make Julia Clifford my wife;—but I can

not suffer myself, in such a case as this, to accept her as a bribe, and to sanction crime. Nay, I am sure that she too would be the first to object."

"And so you really refuse? Well, the world's coming to a pretty pass. But I told Mr. Clifford, months ago, that you had quite forgot yourself, ever since you had grown so great with the Edgertons, and the Blakes, and Fortescues, and all them high-headed people. But I'm sure, Mr. Edward Clifford, my daughter needn't go a-begging to any man; and as for this business, whatever you may say against young Perkins, I'll take his opinion of the law against that of any other young lawyer in the country. He's as good as the best, I'm thinking."

"Your opinion is your own, Mrs. Clifford, but I beg to set you right on the subject of mine. I did not say anything against Mr. Perkins."

"Oh, I beg your pardon; I'm sure you did. You said he was nothing of a lawyer, and something more."

Was there ever a more perverse and evil and silly woman! I contented myself with assuring her that she was mistaken and had very much misunderstood me—took pains to repeat what I had really said, and then cut short an interview that had been painful and humbling to me on many grounds. I left the happy pair *tête-à-tête*, in their princely parlor together, little fancying that there was another argument which had been prepared to overthrow my feeble virtue. But all this had been arranged by the small cunning of this really witless couple. I was left to find my way down stairs as I might; and just when I was about to leave the dwelling—vexed to the heart at the desperate stolidity of the miserable man, whom avarice and weakness were about to expose to a loss which might be averted in part, and an exposure to infamy which might wholly be avoided—I was encountered by the attenuated form and wan countenance of his suffering but still lovely daughter.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOVE FINDS NO SMOOTH WATER IN THE SEA OF LAW

"JULIA!" I exclaimed, with a start which betrayed, I am sure, quite as much surprise as pleasure. My mood was singularly inflexible. My character was not easily shaken, and, once wrought upon by any leading influence, my mind preserved the tone which it acquired beneath it, long after the cause of provocation had been withdrawn. This earnestness of character — amounting to intensity — gave me an habitual sternness of look and expression, and I found it hard to acquire, of a sudden, that command of muscle which would permit me to mould the stubborn lineaments, at pleasure, to suit the moment. Not even where my heart was most deeply interested — thus aroused — could I look the feelings of the lover, which, nevertheless, were most truly the predominant ones within my bosom.

"Julia," I exclaimed, "I did not think to see you."

"Ah, Edward, did you wish it?" she replied in very mournful accents, gently reproachful, as she suffered me to take her hand in mine, and lead her back to the parlor in the basement story. I seated her upon the sofa, and took a place at her side.

"Why should I not wish to see you, Julia? What should lead you to fancy now that I could wish otherwise?"

"Alas!" she replied, "I know not what to think — I scarcely know what I say. I am very miserable. What is this they tell me? Can it be true, Edward, that you are acting against my father — that you are trying to bring him to shame and poverty?"

I released her hand. I fixed my eyes keenly upon hers.

"Julia, you have your instructions what to say. You are sent here for this. They have set you in waiting to meet me

here, and speak things which you do not understand, and assert things which I know you can not believe."

"Edward, I believe *you!*" she exclaimed with emphasis, but with downcast eyes; "but it does not matter whether I was sent here, or sought you of my own free will. They tell me other things—there is more—but I have not the heart to say it, and it needs not much."

"If you believe me, Julia, it certainly does not need that you should repeat to me what is said of me by enemies, equally unjust to me, and hostile to themselves. Yet I can readily conjecture some things which they have told you. Did they not tell you that your hand had been proffered me, and that I had refused it?"

She hung her head in silence.

"You do not answer."

'Spare me; ask me not."

"Nay, tell me, Julia, that I may see how far you hold me worthy of your love, your confidence. Speak to me—have they not told you some such story?"

"Something of this; but I did not heed it, Edward."

"Julia—nay!—did you not?"

"And if I did, Edward—"

"It surely was not to believe it?"

"No! no! no! I had no fears of you—have none, dear Edward! I knew that it was not, could not be true."

"Julia, it was true!"

"Ah!"

"True, indeed! There was more truth in *that* than in any other part of the story. Nay, more—had they told you all the truth, dearest Julia, that part, strange as it may appear, would have given you less pain than pleasure."

"How! Can it be so?"

"Your hand was proffered me by your father, and I refused it. Nay, look not from me, dearest—fear not for my affection—fear nothing. I should have no fear that you could suppose me false to you, though the whole world should come and tell you so. True love is always secured by a just confidence in the beloved object; and, without this confidence, the whole life is a series of long doubts, struggles, griefs, and apprehensions,

which break down the strength, and lay the spirit in the dust. I will now tell you, in few words, what is the relation in which I stand to your father and his family. He, many years ago, committed an error in business, which the laws distinguish by a harsher name. By this error he became rich. Until recently, the proofs of this error were unknown. They have lately been discovered by certain claimants, who are demanding reparation. In the difficulty of your father, he came to me. I examined the business, and have given it as my opinion that he should stifle the legal process by endeavoring to make a private arrangement with the creditors."

"Could he do this?"

"He could. The creditors were willing, and at first he consented that I should arrange it with them. He now rejects the arrangement."

"But why?"

"Because it involves the surrender of the entire amount of property which they claim—a sum of forty thousand dollars."

"But, dear Edward, is it due?—does my father owe this money? If he does, surely he can not refuse. Perhaps he thinks that he owes nothing."

"Nay, Julia, unhappily he knows it, and the offer of your hand, and half of the sum mentioned, was made to me, on the express condition that I should exert my influence as a man, and my ingenuity as a lawyer, in baffling the creditors and stifling the claim."

The poor girl was silent and hung her head, her eyes fixed upon the carpet, and the big tears slowly gathering, dropping from them, one by one. Meanwhile, I explained, as tenderly as I could, the evil consequences which threatened Mr. Clifford in consequence of his contumacy.

"Alas!" she exclaimed, "it is not his fault. He would be willing—I heard him say as much last night—but mother—she will not consent. She refused positively the moment father said it would be necessary to sell out, and move to a cheaper house. Oh, Edward, is there no way that you can save us? Save my father from shame, though he gives up all the money."

"Would I not do this, Julia? Nay, were I owner of the necessary amount myself, believe me, it should not be withheld."

"I do believe you, Edward; but"—and here her voice sunk to a whisper—"you must try again, try again and again—for I think that father knows the danger, though mother does not; and I think—I hope—he will be firm enough, when you press him, and warn him of the danger, to do as you wish him."

"I am afraid not, Julia. Your mother—"

"Do not fear; hope—hope all, dear Edward; for, to confess to you, I *know* that they are anxious to have your support—they said as much. Nay, why should I hide anything from you? They sent me here to see—to speak with you, and—"

"To see what your charms could do to persuade me to be a villain. Julia! Julia! did you think to do this—to have me be the thing which they would make me?"

"No! no!—Heaven forbid, dear Edward, that you should fancy that any such desire had a place, even for a moment, in my mind. No! I knew not that the case involved any but mere money considerations. I knew not that—"

"Enough! Say no more, Julia! I do not think that you would counsel me to my own shame."

"No! no! You do me only justice. But, Edward, you will save my father! You will try—you will see him again—"

"What! to suffer again the open scorn, the declared doubts of my friendship and integrity, which is the constant language of your mother? Can it be that you would desire that I should do this—nay, seek it?"

"For my poor father's sake!" she cried, gaspingly.

But I shook my head sternly.

"For mine, then—for mine! for mine!"

She threw herself into my arms, and clung to me until I promised all that she required. And as I promised her, so I strove with her father. I used every argument, resorted to every mode of persuasion, but all was of no avail. Mr. Clifford was under the rigid, the iron government of his fate! His wife was one of those miserably silly women—born, according to Iago—

"To suckle fools and chronicle small beer"—

who, raised to the sudden control of unexpected wealth, becomes insane upon it, and is blind, deaf, and dumb, to all coun-

sel or reason which suggests the possibility of its loss. From the very moment when Mr. Clifford spoke of selling out house, horses, and carriage, as the inevitable result which must follow his adoption of my recommendation, she declared herself against it at all hazards, particularly when her husband assured her that "the glorious uncertainties of the law" afforded a possibility of his escape with less loss. The loss of money was, with her, the item of most consideration; her mind was totally insensible to that of reputation. She was willing to make this compromise with me, as a sort of alternative, for, in that case, there would be no diminution of attendance and expense—no loss of rank and equipage. We should all live together—how harmoniously, one may imagine—but the grandeur and the state would still be intact and unimpaired. Even for this, however, she was not prepared, when she discovered that there was no certainty that my alliance would bring immunity to her husband. How this notion got even partially into his head, I know not; unless in consequence of a growing imbecility of intellect, which in a short time after betrayed itself more strikingly. But of this in its own place.

My attempts to convince my unfortunate uncle were all rendered unavailing, and shown to be so to Julia herself in a very short time afterward. The insolence of Mrs. Clifford, when I did seek an interview with her husband, was so offensive and unqualified, that Julia herself, with a degree of indignation which she could not entirely suppress, begged me to quit the house, and relieve myself from such undeserved insult and abuse. I did so, but with no unfriendly wishes for the wretched woman who presided over its destinies, and the no less wretched husband whom she helped to make so; and my place as consulting friend and counsellor was soon supplied by Mr. Perkins—one of those young barristers, to be found in every community, who regard the "penny fee" as the *sine qua non*, and obey implicitly the injunction of the scoundrel in the play: "Make money—honestly if you can, but—make money!" He was one of those creatures who set people at loggerheads, goad foolish and petulant clients into lawsuits, stir up commotions in little sets, and invariably comfort the suit-bringer with the most satisfactory assurances of success. It was the confi-

dent assurances of this person which had determined Mr. Clifford — his wife rather — to resist to the last the suit in question. Through the sheer force of impudence, this man had obtained a tolerable share of practice. His clients, as may be supposed, lay chiefly among such persons as, having no power or standard for judging, necessarily look upon him who is most bold and pushing as the most able and trustworthy. The bullies of the law — and, unhappily, the profession has quite too many — are very commanding persons among the multitude. Mr. Clifford knew this fellow's mental reputation very well, and was not deceived by the confidence of his assurances; nay, to the last, he showed a hankering desire to give me the entire control of the subject; but the hostility of Mrs. Clifford overruled his more prudent if not more honorable purposes; and, as he was compelled to seek a lawyer, the questionable moral standing of Perkins decided his choice. He wished one, in short, to do a certain piece of dirty work; and, as if in anticipation of the future, he dreaded to unfold the case to any of the veterans, the old-time gentlemen and worthies of the bar. I proposed this to him. I offered to make a supposititious relation of the facts for the opinion of Mr. Edgerton and others — nay, pledged myself to procure a confidential consultation — anything, sooner than that he should resort to a mode of extrication which, I assured him, would only the more deeply involve him in the meshes of disgrace and loss. But there was a fatality about this gentleman — a doom that would not be baffled, and could not be stayed. The wilful mind always precipitates itself down the abyss; and, whether acting by his own, or under the influence of another's judgment, such was, most certainly, the case with him. He was not to be saved. Mr. Perkins was regularly installed as his defender — his counsellor, private and public — and I was compelled, though with humiliating reluctance, to admit to the plaintiffs, Banks & Tressell, that there was no longer any hope of compromise. The issue on which hung equally his fortune and his reputation was insanely challenged by my uncle.

CHAPTER IX.

DUELLO.

But my share in the troubles of this affair was not to end, though I was no longer my uncle's counsellor. An event now took place which gave the proceedings a new and not less unpleasing aspect than they had worn before. Mrs. Clifford, it appears, in her communications to her husband's lawyer, did not confine herself to the mere business of the lawsuit. Her voluminous discourse involved her opinions of her neighbors, friends, and relatives; and, one day, a few weeks after, I was suddenly surprised by a visit from a gentleman — one of the members of the bar — who placed a letter in my hands from Mr. Perkins. I read this billet with no small astonishment. It briefly stated that certain reports had reached his ears, that I had expressed myself contemptuously of his abilities and character, and concluded with an explicit demand, not for an explanation, but an apology. My answer was immediate.

"You will do me the favor to say, Mr. Carter, that Mr. Perkins has been misinformed. I never uttered anything in my life which could disparage either his moral or legal reputation."

"I am sorry to say, Mr. Clifford," was the reply, "that denial is unnecessary, and can not be received. Mr. Perkins has his information from the lips of a lady; and, as a lady is not responsible, she can not be allowed to err. I am required, sir, to insist on an apology. I have already framed it, and it only needs your signature."

He drew a short, folded letter, from his pocket, and placed it before me. There was so much cool impertinence in this proceeding, and in the fellow's manner, that I could with difficulty refrain from flinging the paper in his face. He was one of the little and vulgar clique of which Perkins was a sort of centre.

The whole set were conscious enough of the low estimate which was put upon them by the gentlemen of the bar. Denied caste, they were disposed to force their way to recognition by the bully's process, and stung by some recent discouragements, Mr. Perkins was, perhaps, rather glad than otherwise, of the silly, and no less malicious than silly, tattle of Mrs. Clifford for I did not doubt that the gross perversion of the truth which formed the basis of his note, had originated with her, which enabled him to single out a victim, who, as the times went, had suddenly risen to a comparative elevation which is not often accorded to a young beginner. I readily conjectured his object from his character and that of the man he sent. My own nature was passionate; and the rude school through which my boyhood had gone, had made me as tenacious of my position as the grave. That I should be chafed by reptiles such as these, stung me to vexation; and though I kept from any violence of action, my words did not lack of it.

"Mr. Perkins is, permit me to say, a very impertinent fellow; and, if you please, our conference will cease from this moment."

He was a little astounded—rose, and then recovering himself, proceeded to reply with the air of a veteran martinet.

"I am glad, sir, that you give me an opportunity of proceeding with this business without delay. My friend, Mr. Perkins, prepared me for some such answer. Oblige me, sir, by reading this paper." He handed me the challenge for which his preliminaries had prepared me.

"Accepted, sir; I will send my friend to you in the course of the morning."

As I uttered this reply, I bowed and waved him to the door. He did not answer, other than by a bow, and took his departure. The promptness which I had shown impressed him with respect. Baffled, in his first spring, the bully, like the tiger, is very apt to slink back to his jungle. His departure gave me a brief opportunity for reflection, in which I slightly turned over in my mind the arguments for and against duelling. But these were now too late—even were they to decide me against the practice—to affect the present transaction; and I sallied out to seek a friend—a friend!

Here was the first difficulty. I had precious little choice among friends. My temper was not one calculated to make or keep friends. My earnestness of character, and intensity of mood, made me dictatorial; and where self-esteem is a large and active development, as it must be in an old aristocratic community, such qualities are continually provoking popular hostility. My friends, too, were not of the kind to whom such scrapes as the present were congenial. I was unwilling to go to young Edgerton, as I did not wish to annoy his parents by my novel anxieties. But where else could I turn? To him I went. When he heard my story, he began by endeavoring to dissuade me from the meeting.

"I am pledged to it, William," was my only answer.

"But, Edward, I am opposed to duelling myself, and should not promote or encourage, in another, a practice which I would not be willing myself to adopt."

"A good and sufficient reason, William. You certainly should not. I will go to Frank Kingsley."

"He will serve you, I know; but, Edward, this duelling is a bad business. It does no sort of good. Kill Perkins, and it does not prove to him, even if he were then able to hear, that Mrs. Clifford spoke a falsehood; and if he kills you, you are even still farther from convincing him.

"I have no such desire, William; and your argument, by the way, is one of those beggings of the question which the opponents of duelling continually fall into when discussing the subject. The object of the man, who, in a case like mine, fights a duel, is not to prove his truth, but to protect himself from persecution. Perkins seeks to bully and drive me out of the community. Public opinion here approves of this mode of protecting one's self;—nay, if I do not avail myself of its agency, the same public opinion would assist my assailant in my expulsion. I fight on the same ground that a nation fights when it goes to war. It is the most obvious and easy mode to protect myself from injury and insult. So long as I submit, Perkins will insult and bully, and the city will encourage him. If I resist, I silence this fellow, and perhaps protect other young beginners. I have not the most distant idea of convincing him of my truth by fighting him—nay, the idea of

giving him satisfaction is an idea that never entered my brain. I simply take a popular mode of securing myself from outrage and persecution."

"But, do you secure yourself? Has duelling this result?"

"Not invariably, perhaps; simply because the condition of humanity does not recognise invariable results. If it is shown to be the probable, the frequent result, it is all that can be expected of any human agency or law."

"But, is it probable—frequent?"

"Yes, almost certain, almost invariable. Look at the general manners, the deportment, the forbearance, of all communities where duelling is recognised as an agent of society. See the superior deference paid to females, the unfrequency of bullying, the absence of blackguarding, the higher tone of the public press, and of society in general, from which the public press takes its tone, and which it represents in our country, but does not often inform. Even seduction is a rare offence, and a matter of general exclamation, where this extra-judicial agent is recognised."

And so forth. It is not necessary to repeat our discussion of this vexed question, of its uses and abuses. I did not succeed in convincing him, and, under existing circumstances, it is not reasonable to imagine that his arguments had any influence over me. To Frank Kingsley I went, and found him in better mood to take up the cudgels, and even make my cause his own. He was one of those ardent bloods, who liked nothing better than the excitement of such an affair; whether as principal or assistant, it mattered little. To him I expressed my wish that his arrangements should bring the matter to an issue, if possible, within the next twenty-four hours.

"Prime!" he exclaimed, rubbing his hands. "That's what I like. If you shoot as quickly now, and as much to the point, you may count any button on Perkins's coat."

He proceeded to confer with the friend of my opponent, while, with a meditative mind, I went to my office, necessarily oppressed with the strange feelings belonging to my situation. In less than two hours after Kingsley brought me the *carte*, by which I found that the meeting was to take place two miles out

of town, by sunrise the day after the one ensuing—the weapons, pistols—distance, as customary, ten paces!

"You are a shot, of course?" said Kingsley.

My answer, in the negative, astonished him.

"Why, you will have little or no time for practice."

"I do not intend it. My object is not to kill this man; but to make him and all others see that the dread of what may be done, either by him or them, will never reconcile me to submit to injury or insult. I shall as effectually secure this object by going out, as I do, without preparation, as if I were the best shot in America. He does not know that I am not; and a pistol is always a source of danger when in the grasp of a determined man."

"You are a queer fellow in your notions, Clifford, and I can not say that I altogether understand you; but you must certainly ride out with me this afternoon, and bark a tree. It will do no hurt to a determined man to be a skilful one also."

"I see no use in it."

"Why—what if you should wish to wing him?"

"I think I can do it without practice. But I have no such desire."

"Really you are unnecessarily magnanimous. You may be put to it, however. Should the first shot be ineffectual and he should demand a second, would you throw away that also?"

"No! I should then try to shoot him. As my simple aim is to secure myself from persecution, which is usually the most effectual mode of destroying a young man in this country, I should resort only to such a course as would be likely to yield me this security. That failing, I should employ stronger measures; precisely as a nation would do in a similar conflict with another nation. One must not suffer himself to be destroyed or driven into exile. This is the first law of nature—this of self-preservation. In maintaining this law, a man must do any or all things which in his deliberate judgment, will be effectual for the end proposed. Were I fighting with savages, for example, and knew that they regarded their scalps with more reverence than their lives, I should certainly scalp as well as slay."

'They would call that barbarous?"

"Ay, no doubt; particularly in those countries where they paid from five to fifty, and even one hundred pounds to one Indian for the scalp of his brother, until they rid themselves of both. But see you not that the scalping process, as it produces the most terror and annoyance, is decidedly the most merciful, as being most likely to discourage and deter from war. If the scalp could be taken from the head of every Seminole shot down, be sure the survivors never after would have come within range of rifle-shot."

But these discussions gave way to the business before me. Kingsley left me to myself, and though sad and serious with oppressive thoughts, I still had enough of the old habits, dominant with me, to go to my daily concerns, and arrange my papers with considerable industry and customary method. My professional business was set in order, and Edgerton duly initiated in the knowledge of all such portions as needed explanation. This done, I sat down and wrote a long farewell letter to Julia, and one, more brief, but renewing the counsel I had previously given to her father, in respect to the suit against him. These letters were so disposed as to be sent in the event of my falling in the fight. The interval which followed was not so easy to be borne. Conscience and reflection were equally busy, and unpleasantly so. I longed for the time of action which should silence these unpleasant monitors.

The brief space of twenty-four hours was soon overpassed, and my anxieties ceased as the moment for the meeting with my enemy, drew nigh. My friend called at my lodgings a good hour before daylight—it was a point of credit with him that we should not delay the opposite party the sixtieth part of a second. We drove out into the country in a close carriage, taking a surgeon—who was a friend of Kingsley—along with us. We were on the ground in due season, and some little time before our customers. But they did not fail or delay us. They were there with sufficient promptitude.

Perkins was a man of coolness and courage. He took his position with admirable *nonchalance;* but I observed, when his eyes met mine, that they were darkened with a scowl of anger. His brows were contracted, and his face which was ordinarily red, had an increased flush upon it which betrayed unusual ex-

citement. He evidently regarded me with feelings of bitter animosity. Perhaps this was natural enough, if he believed the story of Mrs. Clifford—and my scornful answer to his friend, Mr. Carter, was not calculated to lessen the soreness. For my part, I am free to declare, I had not the smallest sentiment of unkindness toward the fellow. I thought little of him, but did not hate—I could not have hated him. I had no wish to do him hurt; and, as already stated, only went out to put a stop to the further annoyances of insolents and bullies, by the only effectual mode—precisely as I should have used a bludgeon over his head, in the event of a personal assault upon me. Of course, I had no purpose to do him any injury, unless with the view to my own safety. I resolved secretly to throw away my fire. Kingsley suspected me of some such intention, and earnestly protested against it.

"I should not place you at all," he said, "if I fancied you could do a thing so d——d foolish. The fellow intends to shoot you if he can. Help him to a share of the same sauce."

I nodded as he proceeded to his arrangements. Here some conference ensued between the seconds:—

"Mr. Carter was very sorry that such a business must proceed. Was it yet too late to rectify mistakes? Might not the matter be adjusted?"

Kingsley, on such occasions, the very prince of punctilio, agreed that the matter was a very lamentable one—to be regretted, and so forth—but of the necessity of the thing, he, Mr. Carter, for his principal, must be the only judge.

"Mr. Carter could answer for his friend, Mr. Perkins, that he was always accessible to reason."

"Mr. Kingsley never knew a man more so than *his* principal."

"May we not reconcile the parties?" demanded Mr. Carter.

"Does Mr. Perkins withdraw his message?" answered Kingsley by another question.

"He would do so, readily, were there any prospect of adjusting the matter upon an honorable footing."

"Mr. Carter will be pleased to name the basis for what he esteems an honorable adjustment."

"Mr. Perkins withdraws his challenge."

"We have no objection to that."

"He substitutes a courteous requisition upon Mr. Clifford for an explanation of certain language, supposed to be offensive, made to a lady."

"Mr. Clifford denies, without qualification, the employment of any such language."

"This throws us back on our old ground," said Carter—"there is a lady in question—"

"Who can not certainly be brought into the controversy," said Kingsley—"I see no other remedy, Mr. Carter, but that we should place the parties. We are here to answer to your final summons."

"Very good, sir; this matter, and what happens, must lie at your door. You are peremptory. I trust you have provided a surgeon."

"His services are at your need, sir," replied Kingsley with military courtesy.

"I thank you, sir—my remark had reference to your own necessity. Shall we toss up for the word?"

These preliminaries were soon adjusted. The word fell to Carter, and thus gave an advantage to Perkins, as his ear was more familiar than mine with the accents of his friend. We were placed, and the pistol put into my hands, without my uttering a sentence.

"Coolly now, my dear fellow," said Kingsley in a whisper, as he withdrew from my side;—"wing him at least—but don't burn powder for nothing."

Scarcely the lapse of a moment followed, when I heard the words "one," "two," "three," in tolerably rapid succession, and, at the utterance of the last, I pulled trigger. My antagonist had done so at the first. His eye was fixed upon mine with deliberate malignity—*that* I clearly saw—but it did not affect my shot. This, I purposely threw away. The skill of my enemy did not correspondend with his evident desires. I was hurt, but very slightly. His bullet merely raised the skin upon the fleshy part of my right thigh. We kept our places while a conference ensued between the two seconds. Mr. Perkins, through his friend, declared himself unsatisfied unless I apologized, or—in less unpleasant language—explained. This demand was answered by Kingsley with cavalier indifference He came to me with a second pistol. His good-humored visage was now slightly ruffled.

"Clifford!" said he, as he put the weapon into my hand, "you must trifle no longer. This fellow abuses your generosity. He knows, as well as I, that you threw away your fire; and he will play the same game with you, on the same terms, for a month together, Sundays not excepted. I am not willing to stand by and see you risk your life in this manner; and, unless you tell me that you will give him as good as he sends, I leave you on the spot. Will you take aim this time?"

"I will!"

"You promise me then?"

"I do!"

I was conscious of the increased activity of my organ of destructiveness as I said these words. I smiled with a feeling of pleasant bitterness — that spicy sort of malice which you may sometimes rouse in the bosom of the best-natured man in the world, by an attempt to do him injustice. The wound I had received, though very trifling, had no little to do with this determination. It was not unlike such a wound as would be made by a smart stroke of a whip, and the effect upon my blood was pretty much as if it had been inflicted by some such instrument. I was stung and irritated by it, and the pertinacity of my enemy, particularly as he must have seen that my shot was thrown away, decided me to punish him if I could. I did so! I was not conscious that I was hurt myself, until I saw him falling! — I then felt a heavy and numbing sensation in the same thigh which had been touched before. A faintness relieved me from present sensibility, and when I became conscious, I found myself in the carriage, supported by Kingsley and the surgeon, on my way to my lodgings. My wound was a flesh wound only; the ball was soon extracted, and in a few weeks after, I was enabled to move about with scarcely a feeling of inconvenience. My opponent suffered a much heavier penalty. The bone of his leg was fractured, and it was several months before he was considered perfectly safe. The lesson he got made him a sorer and shorter — a wiser, if not a better man; but as I do not now, and did not then, charge myself with the task of bringing about his moral improvement, it is not incumbent upon me to say anything further on this subject. We will leave him to get better as he may

CHAPTER X.

HEAD WINDS.

The hurts of Perkins did not, unhappily, delay the progress of my uncle to that destruction to which his silly wife and knavish lawyer had destined him. His business was brought before the court by the claimants, Messrs. Banks & Tressell; and a brief period only was left him for putting in his answer. When I thought of Julia, I resolved, in spite of all previous difficulties—the sneers of the father, and the more direct, coarse insults of the mother—to make one more effort to rescue him from the fate which threatened him. I felt sure that, for the reasons already given, the merchants would still be willing to effect a compromise which would secure them the principal of their claim, without incurring the delay and risk of litigation. Accordingly, I penned a note to Mr. Clifford, requesting permission to wait upon him at home, at a stated hour. To this I received a cold, brief answer, covering the permission which I sought. I went, but might as well have spared myself the labor and annoyance of this visit. Mrs. Clifford was still in the ascendant—still deaf to reason, and utterly blind to the base position into which her meddlesome interference in the business threw her husband. She had her answer ready; and did not merely content herself with rejecting my overtures, but proceeded to speak in the language of one who really regarded me as busily seeking, by covert ways, to effect the ruin of her family. Her looks and language equally expressed the indignation of a mind perfectly convinced of the fraudulent and evil purposes of the person she addressed. Those of my uncle were scarcely less offensive. A grin of malicious self-gratulation mantled his lips as he thanked me for my counsel, which, he

yet remarked, "however wise and good, and well-intended, he did not think it advisable to adopt. He had every confidence in the judgment of Mr. Perkins, who, though without the great legal knowledge of some of his youthful neighbors, had enough for his purposes; and had persuaded him to see the matter in a very different point of view from that in which I was pleased to regard it."

There was no doing anything with or for these people. The fiat for their overthrow had evidently been issued. The fatuity which leads to self-destruction was fixed upon them; and, with a feeling rather of commiseration than anger, I prepared to leave the house. In this interview, I made a discovery, which tended still more to lessen the hostility I might otherwise have felt toward my uncle. I was constrained to perceive that he labored under an intellectual feebleness and incertitude which disconcerted his expression, left his thoughts seemingly without purpose, and altogether convinced me that, if not positively imbecile in mind and memory, there were yet some ugly symptoms of incapacity growing upon him which might one day result in the loss of both. I had always known him to be a weak-minded man, disposed to vanity and caprice, but the weakness had expanded very much in a brief period, and now presented itself to my view in sundry very salient aspects. It was easy now to divert his attention from the business which he had in hand—a single casual remark of courtesy or observation would have this effect—and then his mind wandered from the subject with all the levity and caprice of a thoughtless damsel. He seemed to entertain now no sort of apprehension of his legal difficulties, and spoke of them as topics already adjusted Nay, for that matter, he seemed to have no serious sense of any subject, whatever might be its personal or general interest; but, passing from point to point, exhibited that instability of mental vision which may not inaptly be compared to that wandering glance which is usually supposed to distinguish and denote, in the physical eye, the presence of insanity. It was not often now that he indulged, while speaking to me, in that manner of hostility—those sneers and sarcastic remarks —which had been his common habit. This was another proof of the change which his mental man had undergone. It was

not that he was more prudent or more tolerant than before. He was quite as little disposed to be generous toward me. But he now appeared wholly incapable of that degree of intellectual concentration which could enable him to examine a subject to its close. He would begin to talk with me seriously enough, and with a due solemnity, about the suit against him; but, in a tangent, he would dart off to the consideration of some trifle, some household matter, or petty affair, of which, at any other time, he must have known that his hearers had no wish to hear. Poor Julia confirmed the conjectures which I entertained, but did not utter, by telling me that her father had changed very much in his ways ever since this business had been begun.

"Mother does not see it, but he is no longer the same man. Oh, Edward, I sometimes think he's even growing childish."

The fear was a well-founded one. Before the case was tried, Mr. Clifford was generally regarded, among those who knew him intimately, as little better than an imbecile; and so rapid was the progress of his infirmity, that when the judgment was given, as it was, against him, he was wholly unable to understand or fear its import. His own sense of guilt had anticipated its effects, and his intense vanity was saved from public shame only by the substitution of public pity. The decree of the court gave all that was asked; and the handsome competence of the Cliffords was exchanged for a miserable pittance, which enabled the family to live only in the very humblest manner.

It will readily be conjectured, from what I have stated in respect to myself, that mine was not the disposition to seek revenge, or find cause for exultation in these deplorable events. I had no hostility against my unhappy uncle; I should have scorned myself if I had. If such a feeling ever filled my bosom, it would have been most effectually disarmed by the sight of the wretched old man, a grinning, gibbering idict, half-dancing and half-shivering from the cold, over the remnants of a miserable and scant fire in the severest evening in November. It was when the affair was all over; when the property of the family was all in the hands of the sheriff; when the mischievous counsel of such a person as Jonathan Perkins, Esquire, could do no more harm even to so foolish a person as my uncle's

wife; and when his presence, naturally enough withdrawn from a family from which he could derive no further profit, and which he had helped to ruin, was no longer likely to offend mine by meeting him there—that I proceeded to renew my direct intercourse with the unfortunate people whom I was not suffered to save.

The reader is not to suppose that I had kept myself entirely aloof from the family until these disasters had happened. I sought Julia when occasion offered, and, though she refused it, tendered my services and my means whenever they might be bestowed with hope of good. And now, when all was over, and I met her at the door, and she sank upon my bosom, and wept in my embrace, still less than ever was I disposed to show to her mother the natural triumph of a sagacity which had shown itself at the expense of hers. I forgot, in the first glance of my uncle, all his folly and unkindness. He was now a shadow, and the mental wreck was one of the most deplorable, as it was one of the most rapid and complete, that could be imagined. In less than seven months, a strong man—strong in health—strong, as supposed, in intellect—singularly acute in his dealings among tradesmen—regarded by them as one of the most shrewd in the fraternity—vain of his parts, of his family, and of his fortune—solicitous of display, and constant in its indulgence!—that such a man should be stricken down to imbecility and idiotism—a meagre skeleton in form—pale, puny, timid—crouching by the fireplace—grinning with stealthy looks, momently cast around him—and playing—his most constant employment—with the bellows-strings that hung beside him, or the little kitten, that, delighted with new consideration, had learned to take her place constantly at his feet! What a wreck!

But the moral man had been wrecked before, or this could not have been. It was only because of his guilt—of its exposure rather—that he sunk. In striving to shake off the oppressive burden, he shook off the intellect which had been compelled chiefly to endure it. The sense of shame, the conviction of loss, and, possibly, other causes of conscience which lay yet deeper—for the progeny of crime is most frequently a litter as numerous as a whelp's puppies—helped to crush the mind

which was neither strong enough to resist temptation at first, nor to bear exposure at last. I turned away with a tear, which I could not suppress, from the wretched spectacle. But I could have borne with more patience to behold this ruin, than to subdue the rising reproach which I felt as I turned to encounter Mrs. Clifford.

This weak woman, still weak, received me coldly, and I could see in her looks that she regarded me as one whom it was natural to suppose would feel some exultation at beholding their downfall. I saw this, but determined to say nothing, in the attempt to undo these impressions. I knew that time was the best teacher in all such matters, and resolved that my deportment should gradually make her wiser on the subject of that nature which she had so frequently abused, and which, I well knew, she could never understand. But this hope I soon discovered to be unavailing. Her disaster had only soured, not subdued her; and, with the natural tendency of the vulgar mind, she seemed to regard me as the person to whom she should ascribe all her misfortunes. As, to her narrow intellect, it seemed natural that I should exult in the accomplishment of my predictions, so it was a process equally natural that she should couple me with their occurrence; and, indeed, I was too nearly connected with the event, through the medium of my unconscious father, not to feel some portion of the affliction on his account also; though neither his memory nor my reputation suffered from the development of the affair in the community where we lived.

Mrs. Clifford did not openly, or in words, betray the feelings which were striving in her soul; but the general restraint which she put upon herself in my presence, the acerbity of her tone, manner, and language, to poor Julia, and the unvaried querulousness of her remarks, were sufficient to apprize me of the spite which she would have willingly bestowed upon myself, had she any tolerable occasion for doing so. A few weeks served still further to humble the conceit and insolence of the unfortunate woman. The affair turned out much more seriously than I expected. A sudden fall in the value of real and personal estate, just about the time when the sheriff's sale took place, rendered necessary a second levy, which swept the miserable remnant of Mr. Clifford's fortune, leaving nothing to my

uncle but a small estate which had been secured by settlement to Mrs. Clifford and her daughter, and which the sheriff could not legally lay hands on.

I came forward at this juncture, and, having allowed them to remove into the small tenement to which, in their reduced condition they found it prudent to retire, I requested a private interview with Mrs. Clifford, and readily obtained it.

I was received by the good lady in apparent state. All the little furniture which she could save from the former, was transferred very inappropriately to the present dwelling-house. The one was quite unsuited to the other. The massive damask curtains accorded badly with the little windows over which they were now suspended, and the sofa, ten feet in length, occupied an unreasonable share of an apartment twelve by sixteen. The *dais* of piled cushions, on which so many fashionable groups had lounged in better times, now seemed a mountain, which begot ideas of labor, difficulty, and up-hill employment, rather than ease, as the eye beheld it cumbering two thirds of the miserable area into which it was so untastefully compressed. These, and other articles of splendor and luxury, if sold, would have yielded her the means to buy furniture more suitable to her circumstances and situation, and left her with some additional resources to meet the daily and sometimes pressing exigencies of life.

The appearance of this parlor argued little in behalf of the salutary effect which such reverses might be expected to produce in a mind even tolerably sensible. They argued, I fancied, as unfavorably for my suit as for the humility of the lady whom I was about to meet. If the parlor of Mrs. Clifford bore such sufficient tokens of her weakness of intellect, her own costume betrayed still more. She had made her person a sort of frame or rack upon which she hung every particle of that ostentatious drapery which she was in the habit of wearing at her fashionable evenings. A year's income was paraded upon her back, and the trumpery jewels of three generations found a place on every part of her person where it is usual for fashionable folly to display such gewgaws. She sailed into the room in a style that brought to my mind instantly the description which Milton gives of the approach of Delilah to Samson, after the first days of his blind captivity:—

"But who is this, what thing of sea or land?—
Female of sex it seems—
That so bedecked, ornate and gay,
Comes this way sailing, like a stately ship
Of Tarsus, bound for the isles
Of Javan or Gadire,
With all her bravery on and tackle trim,
Sails filled, and streamers waving,
Courted by all the winds that hold their play,
An amber scent of odorous perfume
Her harbinger!"

No description could have been more just and literal in the case of Mrs. Clifford. I could scarce believe my eyes; and when forced to do so, I could scarcely suppose that this bravery was intended for my eyes only. Nor was it;—but let me not anticipate. This spectacle, I need not say, sobered me entirely, if anything was necessary to produce this effect, and increased the grave apprehensions which were already at my heart. The next consequence was to make the manner of my communication serious even to severity. A smile, which was of that doubtful sort which is always sinister and offensive, overspread her lips as she motioned me to resume the seat from which I had risen at her entrance; while she threw herself with an air of studied negligence upon one part of the sofa. I felt the awkwardness of my position duly increased, as her house, dress, and manner, convinced me that she was not yet subdued to hers; but a conscious rectitude of intention carried me forward, and lightened the task to my feelings.

"Mrs. Clifford," I said, without circumlocution, "I have presumed to ask your attention this morning to a brief communication which materially affects my happiness, and which I trust may not diminish, if it does not actually promote, yours. Before I make this communication, however, I hope I may persuade myself that the little misunderstandings which have occurred between us are no longer to be considered barriers to our mutual peace and happiness——"

"Misunderstandings, Mr. Clifford?—I don't know what misunderstandings you mean. I'm sure I've never misunderstood you."

I could not misunderstand the insolent tenor of this speech,

but I availed myself of the equivoque which it involved to express my gratification that such was the case.

"My path will then be more easy, Mrs. Clifford — my purpose more easily explained."

"I am glad you think so, sir," she answered coolly, smoothing down certain folds of her frock, and crossing her hands upon her lap, while she assumed the attitude of a patient listener. There was something very repulsive in all this; but I saw that the only way to lessen the unpleasantness of the scene, and to get on with her, would be to make the interview as short as possible, and come at once to my object. This I did.

"It is now more than a year, Mrs. Clifford, since I had the honor to say to my uncle, that I entertained for my cousin Julia such a degree of affection as to make it no longer doubtful to me that I should best consult my own happiness by seeking to make her my wife. I had the pleasure at the same time to inform him, which I believed to be true, that Julia herself was not unwilling that such should be the nearer tie between us ——"

"Yes, yes, Mr. Clifford, I know all this; but my husband and myself thought better of it, and——" she said with fidgetty impatience.

"And my application was refused," I said calmly; thus finishing the sentence where she had paused.

"Well, sir, and what then?"

"At that time, madam, my uncle gave as a reason that he had other arrangements in view."

"Yes, sir, so we had; and this reminds me that those arrangements were broken off entirely in consequence of the perversity which you taught my daughter. I know it all, sir; there's no more need to tell me of it, than there is to deny it. You put my daughter up to refusing young Roberts, who would have jumped at her, as his father did — and he one of the best families and best fortunes in the city. I'm sure I don't know, sir, what object you can have in reminding me of these things."

Here was ingenious perversity. I bore with it as well as I could, and strove to preserve my consideration and calmness.

"You do your daughter injustice, Mrs. Clifford, and me no less, in this opinion. But I do not seek to remind you of misunderstandings and mistakes, the memory of which can do no good.

My purpose now is to renew the offer to you which I originally made to Mr. Clifford. My attachment to your daughter remains unaltered, and I am happy to say that fortune has favored me so far as to enable me to place her in a situation of comparative comfort and independence which I could not offer then——"

"Which is as much as to say that she don't enjoy comfort and independence where she is; and if she does not, sir, to whom is it all owing, sir, but to you and your father? By your means it is that we are reduced to poverty; but you shall see, sir, that we are not entirely wanting in independence. My answer, sir, is just the same as Mr. Clifford's was. I am very much obliged to you for *the honor* you intend my family, but we must decline it. As for the comfort and independence which you proffer to my daughter, I am happy to inform you that she can receive it at any moment from a source perhaps far more able than yourself to afford both, if her perversity does not stand in the way, as it did when young Roberts made his offers. Mr. Perkins, sir, the excellent young man that you tried to murder, is to be here, sir, this very morning, to see my daughter. Here's his letter, sir, which you may read, that you may be under no apprehensions that my daughter will ever suffer from a want of comfort and independence."

She flung a letter down on the sofa beside her, but I simply bowed, and declined looking at it. I did not, however, yield the contest in this manner. I urged all that might properly be urged on the subject, and with as much earnestness as could be permitted in an interview with a lady—and such a lady!—but, as the reader may suppose, my toils were taken in vain: all that I could suggest, either in the shape of reason or expostulation, only served to make her more and more dogged, and to increase her tone of insolence; and sore, stung with vexation, disappointed, and something more than bewildered, I dashed almost headlong out of the house, without seeing either Julia or her father, precisely at the moment when Mr. Perkins was about to enter.

CHAPTER XI.

CRISIS.

THE result of this interview of my rival with the mother of Julia, was afforded me by the latter. The mother had already given her consent to his suit—that of Julia alone was to be obtained; and to this end the arts of the suitor and the mother were equally devoted. Her refusal only brought with it new forms of persecution. Her steps were haunted by the swain, to whom Mrs. Clifford gave secret notice of all her daughter's intentions. He was her invariable attendant at church, where I had the pain constantly to behold them, in such close proximity, that I at length abandoned the customary house of worship, and found my pew in another, where I could be enabled to endure the forms of service without being oppresssd by foreign and distracting thoughts and fancies.

Of the progress of the suit I had occasional intelligence from Julia herself, whom I had, very reluctantly on her part, persuaded to meet me at the house of a female relative and friend, who favored our desires and managed our interviews. Brief were these stolen moments, but oh, how blissful! The pleasures they afforded, however, were almost wholly mine. The clandestine character of our meetings served to deprive her of the joy which they otherwise might have yielded; and the fear that she was not doing right, humbled her spirit and made her tremble with frequent apprehensions.

At length Mrs. Clifford suspected our interviews, and detected them. We had a most stormy scene on one occasion, when the sudden entrance of this lady surprised us together, at the house of our friend. The consequence of this was, a rupture between the ladies, which resulted in Julia's being forbidden to visit the house of her relative again. This measure was fol-

lowed by others of such precaution, that at length I could no longer communicate with her, or even seek her, unless when she was on her way to church. Her appearance then was such as to awaken all my apprehensions. Her form, always slender, was become more so. The change was striking in a single week. Her face, usually pale and delicate, was now haggard. Her walk was feeble, and without elasticity. Her whole appearance was wo-begone and utterly spiritless. Days and weeks passed, and my heart was filled with hourly-increasing apprehensions. I returned to the familiar church, but here I suffered a new alarm. That sabbath the family pew was unoccupied. While I trembled lest something serious had befallen her, I was called on by the family physician. This gentleman had been always friendly. He had been my father's physician, and had been his friend and frequent guest; he knew my history, and sympathized with my fortunes. He now knew the history of Julia's affections. She had made him her confidante so far. and he brought me a letter from her. She was sick, as I expected. This letter was of startling tenor:—

"Save me, Edward, if you can. I am now willing to do as you proposed. I can no longer endure these annoyances—these cruel persecutions! My mother tells me that I must submit and marry this man, if we would save ourselves from ruin. It seems he has a claim against the estate for professional services; and as we have no other means of payment, without the sale of all that is left, he is base enough to insist upon my hand as the condition of his forbearance. He uses threats now, since entreaties have failed him. Oh, Edward, if you can save me, come!—for, of a certainty, I can not bear this persecution much longer and live. I am now willing to consent to do what Aunt Sophy recommended. Do not think me bold to say so, dear Edward—if I am bold, it is despair which makes me so."

I read this letter with mingled feelings of indignation and delight—indignation, because of the cruelties to which the worthless mother and the base suitor subjected one so dear and innocent; delight, since the consent which she now yielded placed the means of saving her at my control. The consent was to a flight and clandestine marriage, to which I had, with

the assistance of our mutual friend, endeavored to persuade her, in several instances, before.

The question now was, how to effect this object, since we had no opportunities for communication; but, before I took any steps in the matter, I made it a point of duty to deprive the infamous attorney, Perkins, of his means of power over the unhappy family. I determined to pay his legal charges; and William Edgerton, at my request, readily undertook this part of the business. They were found to be extortionate, and far beyond anything either warranted by the practice or the fee-bill. Edgerton counselled me to resist the claim; but the subject was too delicate in all its relations, and my own affair with Perkins would have made my active opposition seem somewhat the consequence of malice and inveterate hostility. I preferred to pay the excess, which was done by Edgerton, rather than have any further dispute or difficulty with one whom I so much despised. Complete satisfaction was entered upon the records of the court, and a certified discharge, under the hand of Perkins himself—which he gave with a reluctance full of mortification—was sent in a blank envelope to Mrs. Clifford. She was thus deprived of the only excuse—if, indeed, such a woman ever needs an excuse for wilfulness—for persecuting her unhappy daughter on the score of the attorney.

But the possession of this document effected no sort of change in her conduct. She pursued her victim with the same old tenacity. It was not to favor Perkins that she strove for this object: it was to baffle *me*. That blind heart, which misguides all of us in turn, was predominant in her, and rendered her totally incapable of seeing the cruel consequences to her daughter which her perseverance threatened. Julia was now so feeble as scarcely to leave her chamber; the physician was daily in attendance; and, though I could not propose to make use of his services in promoting a design which would subject him to the reproach of the grossest treachery, yet, without counsel, he took it upon him plainly to assure the mother that the disorder of her daughter arose solely from her mental afflictions. He went farther. Mrs. Clifford, whose garrulity was as notorious as her vanity and folly, herself took occasion, when this was told her, to ascribe the effect to me; and, with her own color

ing, she continued, by going into a long history of our "course of wooing." The doctor availed himself of these statements to suggest the necessity of a compromise, assuring Mrs. Clifford that I was really a more deserving person than she thought me, and, in short, that some concessions must be made, if it was her hope to save her daughter's life.

"She is naturally feeble of frame, nervous and sensitive, and these excitements, pressing upon her, will break down her constitution and her spirits together. Let me warn you, Mrs. Clifford, while yet in season. Dismiss your prejudices against this young man, whether well or ill founded, and permit your daughter to marry him. Suffer me to assure you, Mrs. Clifford, that such an event will do more toward her recovery than all my medicine."

"What, and see him the master of my house—he, the poor beggar-boy that my husband fed in charity, and who turned from him with ingratitude in his moment of difficulty, and left him to be despoiled by his enemies? Never! never! Daughter of mine shall never be wife of his! The serpent! to sting the hand of his benefactor!"

"My dear Mrs. Clifford, this prejudice of yours, besides being totally unfounded, amounts to monomania. Now, I know something of all these matters, as you should be aware; and I should be sorry to counsel anything to you or to your family which would be either disgraceful or injurious. So far from this young man being ungrateful, neglectful, or suffering your husband to be preyed on by enemies, I am of opinion that, if his counsel had been taken in this late unhappy business, you would probably have been spared all of the misery and nearly one half of the loss which has been incurred by the refusal to do so."

"And so you, too, are against us, doctor? You, too, believe everything that this young man tells you?"

"No, madam; I assure you, honestly, that I never heard a single word from his lips in regard to this subject. It is spoken of by everybody but himself."

"Ay! ay! the whole town knows it, and from who else but him, I wonder? But you needn't to talk, doctor, on the subject. My mind's made up. Edward Clifford, while I have

breath to say 'No,' and a hand to turn the lock of the door against him, shall never again darken these doors!"

The physician was a man of too much experience to waste labor upon a case so decidedly hopeless. He knew that no art within his compass could cure so thorough a case of heart-blindness, and he gave her up; but he did not give up Julia. He whispered words of consolation into her ears, which, though vague, were yet far more useful than physic.

"Cheer up, my daughter; be of good heart and faith. *I am sure* that there will be some remedy provided for you, before long, which will do you good. I have given the letter to your aunt, and she promises to do as you wish."

It may be said, *en passant*, that the billet sent to me had been covered in another to my female friend and Julia's relative; and that the doctor, though not unconscious of the agency of this lady between us, was yet guilty of no violation of the faith which is always implied between the family and the physician. He might *suspect*, but he did not *know;* and whatever might have been his suspicions, he certainly did not have the most distant idea of that concession which Julia had made, and of the course of conduct for which her mother's persecutions had now prepared her mind.

Mr. Perkins, though deprived of his lien upon Mrs. Clifford, by reason of his claim, did not in the least forego his intentions. His complaints and threatenings necessarily ceased—his tone was something lowered; but he possessed a hold upon this silly woman's prejudices which was far superior to any which he might before have had upon her fears. His hostility to me was grateful to the hate which she also entertained, and which seemed to be more thoroughly infixed in her after her downfall—which, as it has been seen, she ascribed to me; chiefly because of my predictions that such would be the case. In due proportion to her hate for me, was her desire to baffle my wishes, even though it might be at the expense of her own daughter's life. But a vain mother has no affections—none, at least, worthy of the name, and none which she is not prepared to discard at the first requisition of her dearer self. Her hate of me was so extreme as to render her blind to everything besides—her daughter's sickness, the counsel of the physician,

the otherwise obvious vulgarity and meanness of Perkins, and that gross injustice which I had suffered at her hands from the beginning, and which, to many minds, might have amply justified in me the hostile feelings which she laid to my charge. In this blindness she precipitated events, and by her cruelty justified extremities in self-defence. The moment that Julia exhibited some slight improvement, she was summoned to an interview with Perkins, and in this interview her mother solemnly swore that she should marry him. The base-minded suitor stood by in silence, beheld the loathing of the maiden, heard her distinct refusal, yet clung to his victim, and permitted the violence of the mother, without rebuke — that rebuke which the true gentleman might have administered in such a case, and which, to forbear, was the foulest shame — the rebuke of his own decided refusal to participate in such a sacrifice. But he was not capable of this; and Julia, stunned and terrified, was shocked to hear Mrs. Clifford appoint the night of the following Thursday for the forced nuptials.

"She will consent — she shall consent, Mr. Perkins," were the vehement assurances of the mother, as the craven-spirited suitor prepared to take his leave. "I know her better than you do, and she knows me. Do you fear nothing, but bring Mr ——" (the divine) "along with you. We shall put an end to this folly."

"Oh, do not, do not, mother, if you would not drive me mad!" was the exclamation of the destined victim, as she threw herself at the feet of her unnatural parent. "You will kill me to wed this man! I can not marry him — I can not love him. Why would you force this matter upon me — why! why!"

"Why will you resist me, Julia? why will you provoke your mother to this degree? You have only to consent willingly, and you know how kind I am."

"I can not consent!" was the gasping decision of the maiden.

"You shall! you must! you will!"

"Never! never! On my knees I say it, mother. God will witness what you refuse to believe. I will die before I consent to marry where I do not give my heart."

"Oh, you talk of dying, as if it was a very easy matter. But you won't die. It's more easy to say than do. Do you come,

Mr. Perkins. Don't you mind—don't you believe in these denials, and oaths, and promises. It's the way with all young ladies. They all make a mighty fuss when they're going to be married; but they're all mighty willing, if the truth was known. I ought to know something about it. I did just the same as she when I was going to marry Mr. Clifford; yet nobody was more willing than I was to get a husband. Do you come and bring the parson; she'll sing a different tune when she stands up before him, I warrant you."

"That shall never be, Mr. Perkins!" said the maiden solemnly, and somewhat approaching the person whom she addressed. "I have already more than once declined the honor you propose to do me. I now repeat to you that I will sooner marry the grave and the winding-sheet than be your wife! My mother mistakes me and all my feelings. For your own sake, if not for mine, I beg that *you* will not mistake them; for, if the strength is left me for speech, I will declare aloud to the reverend man whom you are told to bring, the nature of those persecutions to which you have been privy. I will tell him of the cruelty which I have been compelled to endure, and which you have beheld and encouraged with your silence."

Perkins looked aghast, muttered his unwillingness to prosecute his suit under such circumstances, and prepared to take his leave. His mutterings and apologies were all swallowed up in that furious storm of abuse and denunciation which now poured from the lips of the exemplary mother. These we need not repeat. Suffice it that the deep feelings of Julia—her sense of propriety and good taste—prevailed to keep her silent, while her mother, still raving, renewed her assurances to the pettifogger that he should certainly receive his wife at her hands on the evening of the ensuing Thursday. The unmanly suitor accepted her assurances—and took leave of mother and daughter, with the expression of a simpering hope, intended chiefly for the latter, that her objections would resolve themselves into the usual maidenly scruples when the appointed time should arrive Julia mustered strength enough to reply in language which brought down another storm from her mother upon her devoted head.

"Do not deceive yourself, Mr. Perkins—do not let the assu-

rances of my mother deceive you. She does not know me. I can not and will not marry you. I will sooner marry the grave —the winding-sheet—the worm!"

Her strength failed her the moment he left the apartment. She sank in a fainting-fit upon the floor, and was thus saved from hearing the bitter abuse which her miserable and misguided parent continued to lavish upon her, even while undertaking the task of her restoration. The evident exhaustion of her frame, her increasing feebleness, the agony of her mind, and the possibly fatal termination of her indisposition, did not in the least serve to modify the violent and vexing mood of this most unnatural woman!

CHAPTER XII.

"GONE TO BE MARRIED."

THESE proceedings, the tenor of which was briefly communicated to me in a hurried note from Julia, despatched by the hands of the physician, under a cover, to the friendly aunt, rendered it imperatively necessary that, whatever we proposed to do should be done quickly, if we entertained any hope to save her. The tone of her epistle alarmed me exceedingly in one respect, as it evidently showed that she could not much longer save herself. Her courage was sinking with her spirits, which were yielding rapidly beneath the continued presence of that persecution which had so long been acting upon her. She began now to distrust her own strength — her very powers of utterance to declare her aversion to the proposed marriage, if ever the trial was brought to the threatened issue before the holy man.

"What am I to do — what say—" demanded her trembling epistle, "should they go so far? Am I to declare the truth? — can I tell to strange ears that it is my mother who forces this cruel sacrifice upon me? I dread I can not. I fear that my soul and voice will equally fail me. I tremble, dear Edward, when I think that the awful moment may find me speechless, and my consent may be assumed from my silence. Save me from this trial, dearest Edward; for I fear everything now — and fear myself — my unhappy weakness of nerve and spirit — more than all. Do not leave me to this trial of my strength — for I have none. Save me if you can!"

It may be readily believed that I needed little soliciting to exertion after this. The words of this letter occasioned an alarm in my mind, little less — though of a different kind — than that which prevailed in hers. I knew the weakness of

hers—I knew hers—and felt the apprehension that she might fail at the proper moment, even more vividly than she expressed it.

This letter did not take me by surprise. Before it was received, and soon after the first with which she had favored me, by the hands of the friendly physician, I had begun my preparations with the view to our clandestine marriage. I was only now required to quicken them. The obstacle, on the face of it, was, comparatively, a small one. To get her from a dwelling, in which, though her steps were watched, she was not exactly a prisoner, was scarcely a difficulty, where the lover and the lady are equally willing.

Our mode of operations was simple. There was a favorite servant—a negro—who had been raised in the family, had been a playmate with my poor deceased cousin and myself, and had always been held in particular regard by both of us. He was not what is called a house-servant, but was employed in the yard in doing various offices, such as cutting wood, tending the garden, going of messages, and so forth. This was in the better days of the Clifford family. Since its downfall he had been instructed to look an owner, and, opportunely, at this moment, when I was deliberating upon the process I should adopt for the extrication of his young mistress, he came to me to request that I would buy him. The presence of this servant suggested to me that he could assist me materially in my plans. Without suffering him to know the intention which I had formed, I listened to his garrulous harangue. A negro is usually very copious, where he has an auditor; and though, from his situation, he could directly see nothing of the proceedings in the house of his owner, yet, from his fellow-servants he had contrived to gather, perhaps, a very correct account of the general condition of things. It appeared from his story that the attachment of Miss Julia to myself was very commonly understood. The effort of the mother to persuade her to marry Perkins was also known to him; but of the arrangement that the marriage should take place at the early day mentioned in her note, he told me nothing, and, in all probability, this part of her proceedings was kept a close secret by the wily dame Peter—the name of the negro—went on to add, that, loving

me, and loving his young mistress, and knowing that we loved one another, and believing that we should one day be married, he was anxious to have me for his future owner.

"I will buy you, Peter, on one condition."

"Wha's dat, Mas' Ned?"

"That you serve me faithfully on trial, for five days, without letting anybody know who you serve—that you carry my messages without letting anybody hear them except that person to whom you are sent—and, if I give you a note to carry, that you carry it safely, not only without suffering anybody to see the note but the one to whom I send it, but without suffering anybody to know or suspect that you've got such a thing as a note about you."

The fellow was all promises; and I penned a billet to Julia which, in few words, briefly prepared her to expect my attendance at her house at three in the afternoon of the very day when her nuptials were contemplated. I then proceeded to a friend—Kingsley—the friend who had served me in the meeting with Perkins; a bold, dashing, frank fellow, who loved nothing better than a frolic which worried one of the parties; and who, I well knew, would relish nothing more than to baffle Perkins in a love affair, as we had already done in one of strife. To him I unfolded my plan and craved his assistance, which was promised instantly. My female friend, the relative of Julia, whose assistance had been already given us, and whose quarrel with Mrs. Clifford in consequence, had spiced her determination to annoy her still further whenever occasion offered, was advised of our plans; and William Edgerton readily undertook what seemed to be the most innocent part of all, to procure a priest to officiate for us, at the house of the lady in question, and at the appointed time.

My new retainer, Peter, brought me due intelligence of the delivery of the note, in secret, to Julia, and a verbal answer from her made me sanguine of success. The day came, and the hour; and in obedience to our plan, my friend, Kingsley, proceeded boldly to the dwelling of Mrs. Clifford, just as that lady had taken her seat at the dinner-table, requesting to see and speak with her on business of importance. The interview was vouchsafed him, though not until the worthy lady had in-

structed the servant to say that she was just then at the dinner-table, and would be glad if the gentleman would call again.

But the gentleman regretted that he could not call again. He was from Kentucky, desirous of buying slaves, and must leave town the next morning for the west. The mention of his occupation, as Mrs. Clifford had slaves to sell, was sufficient to persuade her to lay down the knife and fork with promptness; and the servant was bade to show the Kentucky gentleman into the parlor. Our arrangement was, that, with the departure of the lady from the table, Julia should leave it also — descend the stairs, and meet me at the entrance.

Trembling almost to fainting, the poor girl came to me, and I received her into my arms, with something of a tremor also. I felt the prize would be one that I should be very loath to lose; and joy led to anxiety, and my anxiety rendered me nervous to a womanly degree. But I did not lose my composure and when I had taken her into my arms, I thought it would be only a prudent precaution to turn the key in the outer door, and leave it somewhere along the highway. This I did, absolutely forgetting, that, in thus securing myself against any sudden pursuit, I had also locked up my friend, the Kentucky trader.

Fortune favored our movements. Our preparations had been properly laid, and Edgerton had the divine in waiting. In less than half an hour after leaving the house of her parents, Julia and myself stood up to be married. Pale, feeble, sad — the poor girl, though she felt no reluctance, and suffered not the most momentary remorse for the steps she had taken, and was about to take, was yet necessarily and naturally impressed with the solemnity and the doubts which hung over the event. Young, timid, artless, apprehensive, she was unsupported by those whom nature had appointed to watch over and protect her; and though they had neglected, and would have betrayed their trust, she yet could not but feel that there was an incompleteness about the affair, which, not even the solemn accents of the priest, the deep requisitions of those pledges which she was called upon to make, and the evident conviction which she now entertained, that what had been done was necessary to be done, for her happiness, and even her life — could entirely remove. There was an awful but sweet earnestness in the sad,

intense glance of entreaty, with which she regarded me when I made the final response. Her large black eye dilated, even under the dewy suffusion of its tears, as it seemed to say:—

"It is to you now — to you alone — that I look for that protection, that happiness which was denied where I had best right to look for it. Ah! let me not look, let me not yield myself to you in vain!"

How imploring, yet how resigned was that glance of tears — love in tears, yet love that trusted without fear! It was the embodiment of innocence, struggling between hope and doubt, and only strengthened for the future by the pure, sweet faith which grew out of their conflict. I look back upon that scene, I recall that glance, with a sinking of the heart which is full of terror and terrible reproach. Ah! then, then, I had no fear, no thought, that I should see that look, and others, more sad, more imploring still, and see them without a corresponding faith and love! I little knew, in that brief, blessed hour, how rapidly the blindness of the heart comes on, even as the scale over the eyes — but such a scale as no surgeon's knife can cut away.

CHAPTER XIII.

BAFFLED FURY.

In the first gush of my happiness—the ceremony being completed, and the possession of my treasure certain—I had entirely forgotten my Kentucky friend, whom I had locked up, in confidential *tête-à-tête* with madam, my exemplary mother-in-law. He was a fellow with a strong dash of humor, and could not resist the impulse to amuse himself at the expense of the lady, by making an admirable scene of the proceeding. He began the business by stating that he had heard she had several negroes whom she wished to sell—that he was anxious to buy—he did not care how many, and would give the very best prices of any trader in the market. At his desire, all were summoned in attendance—some three or four in number, that she had to dispose of—all but the worthy Peter, who, under existing circumstances, was quite too necessary to my proceedings to be dispensed with. These were all carefully examined by the trader. They were asked their ages, their names, their qualities; whether they were willing to go to Kentucky, the paradise of the western Indian, and so forth—all those questions which, in ordinary cases, it is the custom of the purchaser to ask. They were then dismissed, and the Kentuckian next discussed with the lady the subject of prices. But let the worthy fellow speak for himself:—

"I was so cursed anxious," he said, "to know whether you had got off and in safety, for I was beginning to get monstrous tired of the old cat, that I jumped up every now and then to take a peep out of the front window. I made an excuse to spit on such occasions—though sometimes I forgot to do so—and then I would go back and begin again, with something about the bargain and the terms, and whether the negroes were honest, and sound, and all that. Well, though I looked out as often

as I well could with civility, I saw nothing of you, and began to fear that something had happened to unsettle the whole plan; but, after a while, I saw Peter, with his mouth drawn back and hooked up into his ears, with his white teeth glimmering like so many slips of moonshine in a dark night, and I then concluded that all was as it should be. But seeing me look out so earnestly and often, the good lady at length said:—

"'I suppose, sir, your horses are in waiting. Perhaps you'd like to have a servant to mind them.'

"'No, ma'am, I'm obliged to you; but I left the hotel on foot.'

"'Yes, sir,' said she, 'but I thought it might be your horses, seeing you so often look out.'

"I could scarcely keep in my laughter. It did burst out into a sort of chuckle; and, as you were then safe—I knew *that* from Peter's jaws—I determined to have my own fun out of the old woman. So I said—pretty much in this sort of fashion, for I longed to worry her, and knew just how it could be done handsomest—I said:—

"'The truth is, ma'am—pardon me for the slight—but really I was quite interested—struck, as I may say, by a very suspicious transaction that met my eyes a while ago, when I first got up to spit from the window.'

"'Ah, indeed, sir! and pray, if I may ask, what was it you saw?'

"'Really very curious; but getting up to spit, and looking out before I did so—necessary caution, ma'am—some persons might be just under the window, you know—'

"'Yes, sir, yes.' The old creature began to look and talk mighty eager.

"'An ugly habit, ma'am—that of spitting. We Kentuckians carry it to great excess. Foreigners, I'm told, count it monstrous vulgar—effect of tobacco-chewing, ma'am—a deuced bad habit, I grant you, but 'tis a habit, and there's no leaving it off, even if we would. I don't think Kentuckians, as a people, a bit more vulgar than English, or French, or Turks, or any other respectable people of other countries.'

"'No, sir, certainly not; but the transaction—what you saw.'

"'Ah, yes! beg pardon; but, as I was saying, something really quite suspicious! Just as I was about to spit, when I went to the window, some ten minutes ago—perhaps you did not observe, but I did not spit. Good reason for it, ma'am—might have done mischief.'

"'How, sir?'

"'Ah, that brings me to the question I want to ask: any handsome young ladies living about here, ma'am?—here, in your neighborhood?'

"'Why, yes, sir,' answered the old tabby, with something like surprise; 'there's several—there's the Masons, just opposite; the Bagbys, next door to them below, and Mr. Wilford's daughter: all of them would be considered pretty by some persons. On the same side with us, there's Mrs. Freeman and her two daughters, but the widow is accounted by many the youngest looking and prettiest of the whole, though, to my thinking, that's saying precious little for any. Next door to us is a Mr. and Mrs. Gibbs, who have a daughter, and she *is* rather pretty, but I don't know much about them. It might be a mother's vanity, sir, but I think I may be proud of having a daughter myself, who is about as pretty as any of the best among them; and that's saying a great deal less for her than might be said.'

"'Ah, indeed—you a daughter, ma'am? But she is not grown-up, of course—a mere child?'

"'Oh, I beg your pardon, sir,' said the old creature, tickled up to the eyes, and looking at me with the sweetest smiles; 'though it may surprise you very much, she is not only no child, but a woman grown; and, what's more, I think she will be made a wife this very night.'

"'Egad, then I suspect she's not the only one that's about to be made a wife of. I suspect some one of these young ladies, your neighbors, will be very soon in the same condition.'

"'Indeed, sir—pray, who?—how do you know?' and the old tabby edged herself along the sofa until she almost got jam up beside me.

"'Well,' said I, 'I don't *know* exactly, but I'm deucedly suspicious of it, and, more than that, there's some underhand work going on.'

"This made her more curious than ever; and her hands and

feet, and indeed her whole body, got such a fidgeting, that I fancied she began to think of getting St. Vitus for a bedfellow. Her eagerness made her ask me two or three times what made me think so; and, seeing her anxiety, I purposely delayed in order to worry her. I wished to see how far I could run her up. When I did begin to explain, I went to work in a round-about way enough — something thus, old Kentuck — as I began: 'Well, ma'am, this tobacco-chewing, as I said before, carried me, as you witnessed, constantly to the window. I don't know that I chew more than many others, but I know I chew too much for my good, and for decency, too, ma'am.'

"'Yes, sir, yes; but the young lady, and—'

"'Ah, yes, ma'am. Well, then, going to the window once, twice, or thrice, I could not help but see a young man standing beneath it, evidently in waiting — very earnest, very watchful — seemingly very much interested and anxious, as if waiting for somebody.'

"'Is it possible?' whispered the tabby, full of expectation.

"'Yes, very possible, ma'am — very true. There he stood; I could even hear his deep-drawn sighs — deep, long, as if from the very bottom of his heart.'

"'Was he so *very* near, sir?'

"'Just under the window — going to and fro — very anxious. I was almost afraid I had spit on him, he looked up so hard — so—'

"'What, sir, up at you? at — at *my* windows, sir?'

"'Not exactly, ma'am, that was only my notion, for I thought I might have spit upon him, and so wakened his anger; but, indeed, he looked all about him, as, indeed, it was natural that he should, you know, if he meditated anything that wa'n't exactly right. There was a carriage in waiting — a close carriage — not a hundred yards below, and—'

"'Ah, sir, do tell me what sort of a looking young gentleman was it — eh?'

"'Good-looking fellow enough, ma'am — rather tall, slenderish, but not so slender — wore a black frock.' By this time the old creature was up at the window — her long, skinny neck stretched out as far as it could go.

"'Ah!' said I, 'ma'am, you're quite too late, if you expect

to see the sport. They're off; I saw the last of them when I took my last spit from the window. They were then—'

"'But, sir, did he—did you say that this person—the person you spit on—carried a young lady away with him?'

"'You mistake me, ma'am—'

"'Ah!'—she drew a mighty long breath as if relieved.

"'I did *not* spit upon him; I only came near doing it once or twice. If I hadn't looked, I should very probably have divided my quid pretty equally between both of them.'

"'Both! both!' she almost screamed. 'Did she go with him, then?—was there in truth a young woman?'

"You never saw a creature in such a tearing fidget. Her long nose was nearly stuck into my face, and both her hands, all claws extended, seemed ready for my cheeks. I felt a little ticklish, I assure you; but I kept up my courage, determined to see the game out, and answered very deliberately, after I had put a fresh quid into my jaws:—

"'Ay, that she did, ma'am, and seemed deuced glad to go, as was natural enough. A mighty pretty girl she was, too; rather thin, but pretty enough to tempt a clever fellow to do anything. I reckon they're nigh on to being man and wife by this time, let the old people say what they will.'

"But the old put didn't wait to hear me say all this. Before the words were well out of my mouth, she gave a bounce, to the bell-rope first—I thought she'd ha' jerked it to pieces—and then to the head of the stairs.

"'Excuse me for a moment, sir, if you please,' she said, in a considerable fidget.

"'Certainly, ma'am,' says I, with a great Kentucky sort of bow and natural civility; and then I could hear her squalling from the head of the stairs, and at the top of her voice, 'Julia! Julia! Julia!'—but there was no answer from Julia. Then came the servants; then came the outcry; then she bounced back into the parlor, and blazed out at me for not telling her at once that it was her daughter who had been carried off, without making so long a story of it, and putting in so much talk about tobacco.

"'Lord bless you, my dear woman!' says I, innocent enough, 'was that pretty girl your daughter? That accounts for the

fellow looking up at the window so often; and I to fancy that it was all because I might have given him a quid!'

"'You must have seen her *then!*'

"'Well, ma'am,' said I, 'I must come again about the negroes. I see you've got your hands full.'

"And, with that, I pushed down stairs, while she blazed out at her husband, whom she called an old fool; and me, whom she called a young one; and the negroes, whom she ordered to fly in a hundred ways in the same breath; and, to make matters worse, she seized her hat and shawl, and bounced down the steps after me. Here we were in a fix again, that made her a hundred times more furious. The street-door was locked on the outside, and the key gone, and I fastened up with the old mad tabby. I tried to stand it while the servants were belaboring to break open, but the storm was too heavy, and, raising a sash, I went through: and, in good faith, I believe she bounced through after me; for, when I got fairly into the street and looked round, there she went, bounce, flounce, pell-mell, all in a rage, steam up, puffing like a porpoise—though, thank Jupiter! she took another course from myself. I was glad to get out of her clutches, I assure you."

Such was Kingsley's account of his expedition, told in his particular manner; and endued with the dramatic vitality which he was well able to give it, it was inimitable. It needs but a few words to finish it. Mrs. Clifford, with unerring instinct, made her way to the house of that friendly lady who had assisted our proceedings. But she came too late for anything but abuse. Julia was irrevocably mine. Bitter was the clamor which, in our chamber, assailed us from below.

"Oh, Edward, how shall I meet her?" was the convulsive speech of Julia, as she heard the fearful sounds of her mother's voice—a voice never very musical, and which now, stimulated by unmeasured rage—the rage of a baffled and wicked woman—poured forth a torrent of screams rather than of human accents. We soon heard the rush of the torrent up stairs, and in the direction of our chamber.

"Fear nothing, Julia; her power over you is now at an end You are now mine—mine only—mine irrevocably!"

"Ah, she is still my mother!" gasped the lovely trembler in

my arms. A moment more, and the old lady was battering at the door. I had locked it within. Her voice, husky but subdued, now called to her daughter—

"Julia! Julia! Julia!—come out!"

"Who is there? what do you want?" I demanded. I was disposed to keep her out, but Julia implored me to open the door. She had really no strength to reply to the summons of the enraged woman; and her entreaty to me was expressed in a whisper which scarcely filled my own ears. She was weak almost to fainting. I trembled lest her weakness, coupled with her fears, and the stormy scene that I felt might be reasonably anticipated, would be too much for her powers of endurance. I hesitated. She put her hand on my wrist.

"For my sake, Edward, let her in. Let her see me. We will have to meet her, and better now—now, when I feel all the solemnity of my new position, and while the pledges I have just made are most present to my thoughts. Do not fear for me. I am weak and very feeble, but I am resolute. I feel that I am not wrong."

She could scarcely gasp out these brief sentences. I urged her not to risk her strength in the interview.

"As you love me, do as I beg you," she replied, with entreating earnestness. "It does not become me to keep my mother, under any circumstances, thus waiting at the door, and asking entrance."

Meanwhile, the clamors of Mrs. Clifford were continued. Julia's aunt was there also, and the controversy was hot and heavy between them. Annoyed as I was, and apprehensive for Julia, I yet could not forbear laughing at the ludicrousness of my position and the whole scene. I began to think, from the equal violence of the two ancient dames without, that they might finally get to blows. This was also the fear of Julia, and another reason why we should throw open the door. I at length did so; and soon had the doubtful satisfaction of transferring to myself all the wrath of the disappointed mother. She rushed in, the moment the door turned upon its hinges, almost upsetting me in the violence of her onset. Bounding into the apartment with a fury that was utterly beyond her own control, I was led to fear that she might absolutely inflict violence upon her daugh-

ter, who by this time had sunk, in equal terror and exhaustion, upon a sofa in the remotest corner of the room. I hastily placed myself between them, and did not scruple, with extended hands, to maintain a safe interval of space between the two. I will not attempt to describe the tigress rage or the shrieking violence which ensued on the part of this veteran termagant. It was only closed at length, when, Julia having fainted under the storm, dead to all appearance, I picked up the assailant *vi et armis*, and, in defiance of screams and scratches—for she did not spare the use of her talons—resolutely transported her from the chamber.

CHAPTER XIV.

ONE DEBT PAID.

STAGGERING forward under this burden—a burden equally active and heavy—who should I encounter at the head of the stairs, but the liege lord of the lady—my poor imbecile uncle. As soon as she beheld him—foaming and almost unintelligible in her rage—she screamed for succor—cried "murder" "rape," "robbery," and heaven knows what besides. A moment before, though she scratched and scuffled to the utmost, she had not employed her lungs. A momentary imprecation alone had broken from her, as it were, perforce and unavoidably. Now, nothing could exceed the stentorian tumult which her tongue maintained. She called upon her husband to put me to death—to tear me in pieces—to do anything and everything for the punishing of so dreadful an offender as myself. In thus commanding him, she did not forbear uttering her own unmeasured opinion of the demerits of the man whose performances she required.

"If you had the spirit of a man, Clifford—if you were not a poor shoat—you'd never have submitted so long as you have to this viper's insolence. And there you stand, doing nothing—absolutely still as a stock, though you see him beating your wife. Ah! you monster!—you coward!—that I should ever have married a man that wasn't able to protect me."

This is a sufficient sample of her style, and not the worst. I am constrained to confess that some portions of the good lady's language would better have suited the modes of speech common enough among the Grecian housekeepers at the celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries. I have omitted not a few of the bad words, and forborne the repetition of that voluminous eloquence poured out, after the Billingsgate fashion, equally upon myself, her daughter, and husband. During the vituperation she still kicked and scuffled; my face suffered, and my eyes narrowly escaped. But I grasped her firmly; and when her husband, my worthy uncle, in obedience to her orders, sprang upon me, with

the bludgeon which he now habitually carried, I confronted him with the lusty person of his spouse, and regret to say, that the first thwack intended for my shoulders, descended with some considerable emphasis upon hers. This increased her fury, and redoubled her screams. But it did not lessen my determination, or make me change my mode of proceeding. I resolutely pushed her before me. The husband stood at the head of the stairs and my object was to carry her down to the lower story. The stairs were narrow, and by keeping up a good watch, I contrived to force him to give ground, using his spouse as a sort of battering-*ram* — not to perpetrate a pun at the expense of the genders — which, I happened to know, had always been successful in making him give ground on all previous occasions. His habitual deference for the dame, assisted me in my purpose. Step by step, however, he disputed my advance; but I was finally successful; without any injury beyond that which had been inflicted by the talons of the fair lady, and perhaps a single and slight stroke upon the shoulder from the club of her husband, I succeeded in landing her upon the lower flat in safety. Beyond a squeeze or two, which the exigency of the case made something more affectionate than any I should have been otherwise pleased to bestow upon her, she suffered no hurt at my hands.

But, though willing to release her, she was not so willing herself to be released. When I set her free, she flew at me with cat-like intrepidity; and I found her a much more difficult customer than her husband. Him I soon baffled. A moment sufficed to grapple with him and wrench the stick from his hands, and then, with a moderate exercise of agility, I contrived to spring up the stairway which I had just descended, regain the chamber, and secure the door, before they could overtake or annoy me with their further movements. My wife's aunt, meanwhile, had been busy with her restoratives. Julia was now recovering from the fainting fit; and I had the satisfaction of hearing from one of the servants that the baffled enemy had gone off in a fury that made their departure seem a flight rather than a mere retreat.

I should have treated the whole event with indifference — their rage and their regard equally — but for my suffering and sensitive wife. Wronged as she had been, and so persecuted as to render all her subsequent conduct justifiable, she yet forgot none of her

filial obligations; and, in compliance with her earnest entreaties, I had already, the very day after this conflict, prepared an elaborate and respectful epistle to both father and mother, when an event took place of startling solemnity, which was calculated to subdue my anger, and make the feelings of my wife, if possible, more accessible than ever to the influences of fear and sorrow. Only three days from our marriage had elapsed, when her father was stricken speechless in the street. He was carried home for dead. I have already hinted that, months before, and just after the threatened discovery of those fraudulent measures by which he lost his fortune, his mind had become singularly enfeebled; his memory failing, and all his faculties of judgment — never very strong — growing capricious, or else obtuse and unobserving. These were the symptoms of a rapid physical change, the catastrophe of which was at hand. How far the excitement growing out of his daughter's flight and marriage may have precipitated this result, is problematical. It may be said, in this place, that my wife's mother charged it all to my account. I was pronounced the murderer of her husband. On this head I did not reproach myself. It was necessary, however, that a reconciliation should take place between the father and his child. To this I had, of course, no sort of objection. But it will scarce be believed that the miserable woman, her mother, opposed herself to their meeting with the utmost violence of her character. Nothing but the outcry of the family and all its friends — including the excellent physician whose secret services had contributed so much toward my happiness — compelled her to give way, though still ungraciously, to the earnest entreaty of her daughter for permission to see her father before he died! and even then, by the deathbed of the unhappy and almost unconscious man, she recommenced the scene of abuse and bitter reproach, which, however ample the reader and hearer may have already found it, it appears she had left unfinished. It was in the midst of a furious tirade, directed against myself, chiefly, and Julia, in part, that the spasms of death, unperceived by the mother, passed over the contracted muscles of the father's face. The bitter speech of the blind woman — blind of heart — was actually finished after death had given the final blow to the victim. Of this she had no suspicion, until instructed by the piercing shrieks of her daughter, who fell swooning upon the corse before her.

CHAPTER XV.

HONEYMOON PERIOD.

It was supposed by Julia and certain of her friends that an event so solemn, so impressive, and so unexpected, as the death of Mr. Clifford, would reasonably affect the mind of his widow; and the concessions which I had meditated to address to herself and her late husband were now so varied as to apply solely to herself. I took considerable pains in preparing my letter, with the view to soften her prejudices and asperities, as well as to convince her reason. There was one suggestion which Julia was disposed to insist on, to which, however, I was singularly averse. In the destitution of Mrs. Clifford, her diminished and still diminishing resources, not to speak of her loneliness, she thought that I ought to tender her a home with us. Had she been any other than the captious, cross-grained creature that she was—had her misfortunes produced only in part their legitimate and desirable effects of subduing her perversity—I should have had no sort of objection. But I knew her imperious and unreasonable nature; and I may here add, that, by this time, I knew something of my own: I was a man of despotic character. The constant conflicts which I had had from boyhood, resulting as they had done in my frequent successes and final triumph, had, naturally enough, made me dictatorial. Sanguine in temperament, earnest in character, resolute in impulse, I was necessarily arbitrary in mood. It was not likely that Mrs. Clifford would forget her waywardnesses, and it was just as unreasonable that I should submit to her insolences. Besides, one's home ought to be a very sacred place. It is necessary that the peace there should compensate and console for the strifes without. To hope for this in any household where there is more than one master, would be worse than idle. Nay, even if there were peace, the chances are still great that there would

be some lack of propriety. Domestic regulations would become inutile. Children and servants would equally fail of duty and improvement under conflicting authorities; and all the sweet social harmonies of family would be jarred away by misunderstandings if not bickerings, leading to coldness, suspicion, and irremediable jealousies. These things seemed to threaten me from the first moment when Julia submitted to me her desire that her mother should be invited to take up her abode with us. I reasoned with her against it; suggested all the grounds of objection which I really felt; and reviewed at length the long history of our connection from my childhood up, which had been distinguished by her constant hostility and hate. "How," I asked, "can it be hoped that there will be any change for the better now? She is the same woman, I the same man! It is not reasonable to think that the result of our reunion will be other than it has been." But Julia implored.

"I know what you say is reasonable—is just; but, dear Edward, she is my mother, and she is alone."

I yielded to her wishes. Could I else? My letter to her mother concluded with a respectful entreaty that she would take apartments in our dwelling, and a chair at our table, and lessen, to this extent, the expenses of her own establishment.

"What!" exclaimed the frenzied woman to Julia's aunt, to whom the charge of presenting the communication was committed—"what! eat the bread of that insolent and ungrateful wretch? Never! never!"

She flung the epistle from her with disdain; and, to confess a truth, though, on Julia's account, I should have wished a reconciliation, I was by no means sorry, on my own, that such was her ultimatum. I gave myself little further concern about this foolish person, and was happy to see that in a short time my wife appeared to recover from the sadness and stupor which the death of her father and the temper of her mother had naturally induced. The truth is, she had, for so long a period previously to her marriage, suffered from the persecutions of the latter, and moaned over the shame and imbecility of the former, that her present situation was one of great relief, and, for a while, of comparative happiness.

We lived in a pleasant cottage in the suburbs. A broad and

placid lake spread out before our dwelling; and its tiny billows, under the pressure of the sweet southwestern breezes, beat almost against our very doors. Green and shady groves environed us on three sides, and sheltered us from the intrusive gaze of the highway; and never was a brighter collection of flowers and blossoms clustered around any habitation of hope and happiness before. I rented the cottage on moderate terms, and furnished it neatly, but simply, as became my resources. All things considered, the prospect was fair and promising before us. Julia had few toils, and ample leisure for painting and music, for both of which she had considerable taste; for the former art, in particular, she possessed no small talent.

Our city, indeed, seemed one peculiarly calculated for these arts. Our sky was blue — deeply, beautifully blue; our climate mild and delightful. Our people were singularly endowed with the genius for graceful and felicitous performances. Music was an ordinary attribute of the great mass; and in no community under the sun was there such an overflow of talent in painting and sculpture. It was the grand error of our wise heads to fancy that our city could be made one of great trade; and, in a vain struggle to give it some commercial superiority over its neighbor communities, the wealth of the people was thrown away upon projects that yielded nothing; and the arts were left neglected in a region which might have been made — and might still be made — if not exclusively, at least pre-eminently their own. The ordinary look of the women was beauty, the ordinary accent was sweetness. The soft moonlight evenings were rendered doubly harmonious by the tender tinkling of the wandering guitar, or the tones of the plaintive flute; while, from every third dwelling, rose the more stately but scarcely sweeter melodies stricken by pliant fingers from the yielding soul of the divine piano. The tastes even of the mechanic were refined by this language, the purest in which passion ever speaks; and an ambition — the result of the highest tone of aristocratic influence upon society — prompted his desires to purposes and a position to which in other regions he is not often permitted to aspire. These influences were assisted by the peculiar location of our city — by its suburban freedom from all closeness; its innumerable gardens, the appanage of every

household; its piazzas, verandahs, porches; its broad and minstrel-wooing rivers; and the majestic and evergreen forests, which grew and gathered around us on every hand. If ever there was a city intended by nature more particularly than another for the abodes and the offices of art, it was ours. It will become so yet: the mean, money-loving soul of trade can not always keep it from its destinies. We may never see it in our day; but so surely as we live, and as it shall live, will it become an Athens in our land—a city of empire by the sea, renowned for genius and taste—and the chosen retreat of muses, younger and more vigorous, and not less lovely, than the old!

Julia was in a very high degree impregnated with the taste and desire for art which seemed so generally the characteristic of our people. I speak not now of the degree of skill which she possessed. Her teacher was a foreigner, and a mere mechanic; but, while he taught her only the ordinary laws of painting, her natural endowment wrought more actively in favor of her performances. She soon discovered how much she could learn from the little which her teacher knew; and when she made this discovery, she ceased to have any use for his assistance. Books, the study of the old masters, and such of the new as were available to her, served her infinitely more in the prosecution of her efforts; and these I stimulated by all means in my power: for I esteemed her natural endowments to be very high, and very well knew how usual it is for young ladies, after marriage, to give up those tastes and accomplishments which had distinguished and heightened their previous charms. It was quite enough that I admired the art, and tasked her to its pursuit, to make her cling to it with alacrity and love. We wandered together early in the morning and at the coming on of evening, over all the sweet, enticing scenes which were frequent in our suburbs. Environed by two rivers, wide and clear, with deep forests beyond—a broad bay opening upon the sea in front—lovely islands of gleaming sand, strewn at pleasant intervals, seeming, beneath the transparent moonlight, the chosen places of retreat for naiads from the deep and fairies from the grove—there was no lack of objects to delight the eye and woo the pencil to its performances. Besides, never was blue

sky, and gold-and-purple sunset, more frequent, more rich, more shifting in its shapes and colors, from beauty to superior beauty, than in our latitude. The eye naturally turned up to it with a sense of hunger; the mind naturally felt the wish to record such hues and aspects for the use of venerating love; and the eager spirit, beginning to fancy the vision wrought according to its own involuntary wish, seemed spontaneously to cry aloud, in the language of the artist, on whom the consciousness of genius was breaking with a sun-burst for the first time, "I, too, am a painter!"

Julia's studio was soon full of beginnings. Fragmentary landscapes were all about her. Like most southrons, she did not like to finish. There is an impatience of toil—of its duration at least—in the southern mind, which leaves it too frequently unperforming. This is a natural characteristic of an excitable people. People easily moved are always easily diverted from their objects. People of very vivid fancy are also very capricious. There is yet another cause for the non-performance of the southern mind—its fastidiousness. In a high state of social refinement, the standards of taste become so very exacting, that the mind prefers not to attempt, rather than to offend that critical judgment which it feels to be equally active in its analysis and rigid in its requisitions. Genius and ambition must be independent of such restraints. "Be bold, be bold, be bold!" is the language of encouragement in Spenser; and when he says, at the end, "Be not too bold," we are to consider the qualification as simply a quiet caution not to allow proper courage to rush into rashness and insane license. The *genius* that suffers itself to be fettered by the *precise*, will perhaps learn how to polish marble, but will never make it live, and will certainly never live very long itself!

With books and music, painting and flowers, we passed the happy moments of the honeymoon. I yielded as little of myself and my mind to my office and clients, in that period, as I possibly could. My cottage was my paradise. My habits, as might be inferred from my history, were singularly domestic. Doomed, as I had been, from my earliest years, to know neither friends nor parents; isolated, in my infancy, from all those tender ties which impress upon the heart, for all succeeding years,

tokens of the most endearing affection; denied the smiles of those who yet filled my constant sight—my life was a long yearning for things of love—for things to love! While the struggle continued between Julia's parents and myself, though confiding in her love, I had yet no confidence in my own hope to realize and to secure it. Now that it was mine—mine, at last—I grew uxorious in its contemplation. Like the miser, I had my treasure at home, and I hastened home to survey it with precisely the same doubts, and hopes, and fears, which the disease of avarice prompts in the unhappy heart of its victim. To this disease, in chief, I have to attribute all my future sorrows; but the time is not yet for that. It is my joys now that I have to contemplate and describe. How I dwelt, and how I dreamed! how I seemed to tread on air, in the unaccustomed fullness of my spirit! how my whole soul, given up to the one pursuit, I fondly fancied had secured its object! I fancied—nay, for the time, I was happy! Surely, I was happy!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HAPPY SEASON.

SURELY, I then was happy! I can not deceive myself as to the character of those brief Eden moments of security and peace. Even now, lone as I appear in the sight of others—degraded as I feel myself—even now I look back on our low white cottage, by the shores of that placid lake—its little palings gleaming sweetly through its dense green foliage—recall those happy, halcyon days, and feel that we both, for the time, had attained the secret—the secret worth all the rest—of an enjoyment actually felt, and quite as full, flush, and satisfactory, as it had seemed in the perspective. Possession had taken nothing of the *gusto* from hope. Truth had not impaired a single beauty of the ideal. I looked in Julia's face at morning when I awakened, and her loveliness did not fade. My lips, that drank sweetness from hers, did not cease to believe the sweetness to be there—as pure, as warm, as full of richness, as when I had only dreamed of their perfections. Our days and nights were pure, and gentle, and fond. One twenty-four hours shall speak for all.

When we rose at morning, we prepared for a ramble, either into the woods, or along the banks of the lovely river that lay west of, and at a short distance only from, our dwelling. There, wandering, as the sun rose, we imparted to each other's eyes the several objects of beauty which his rising glance betrayed. Sometimes we sat beneath a tree, while she hurriedly sketched a clump of woods, the winding turn of the shore, its occasional crescent form or abrupt headland, as they severally appeared in a new light, and at a happy moment of time, beneath our vision. The songs of pleasant birds allured us on: the sweet scent of pines and myrtle refreshed us; and a gay, wholesome, hearty spirit was awakened in our mutual bosoms, as thus, day


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after day, while, like the day, our hearts were in their first youth, we resorted to the ever-fresh mansions of the sovereign Nature. This habit produces purity of feeling, and continues the habit in its earliest simplicity. The childlike laws which it encourages and strengthens are those which virtue most loves, and which strained forms of society are the first to overthrow. The pure tastes of youth are those which are always most dear to humanity; and love is easy of access, and peace not often a stranger to the mind, where these tastes preserve their ascendency.

My profession was something at variance with these tastes and feelings. The very idea of law, which presupposes the frequent occurrence of injustice, engenders, by its practice, a habit of suspicion. To throw doubt upon the fact, and defeat and prevent convictions of the probable, are habits which lawyers soon acquire. This is natural from the daily encounter with bad and striving men—men who employ the law as an instrument by which to evade right, or inflict wrong; and, this apart, the acute mind loves, for its own sake, the very exercise of doubt, by which ingenuity is put in practice, and an adroit discrimination kept constantly at work.

I was saved, however, from something of this danger. The injustice which I had been subjected to, in my own boyhood, had filled me with the keenest love for the right. The idea of injustice aroused my sternest feelings of resistance. I had adopted the law as a profession with something of a patriotic feeling. I felt that I could make it an instrument for putting down the oppressor, the wrong-doer—for asserting right, and maintaining innocence! I had my admiration, too, at that period, of that logical astuteness, that wonderful tenacity of hold and pursuit, and discrimination of attribute and subject, which distinguish this profession beyond all others, and seem to confirm the assumption made in its behalf, by which it has been declared the perfection of human reason. It will not be subtracting anything from this estimate, if I express my conviction, founded upon my own experience, that, though such may be the character of the law as an abstract science, it deserves no such encomium as it is ordinarily practised. Lawyers are too commonly profound only in the technicalities of the

profession; and a very keen study and acquaintance with these —certainly a too great reliance upon them, and upon the dicta of other lawyers—leads to a dreadful departure from elementary principles, and a most woful disregard, if not ignorance, of those profounder sources of knowledge without which laws multiply at the expense of reason, and not in support of it; and lawyers may be compared to those ignorant captains to whom good ships are intrusted, who rely upon continual sounding to grope their way along the accustomed shores. Let them once leave the shores, and get beyond the reach of their plummets, and the good ship must owe its safety to fortune and the favor of the winds, for further skill is none.

I did not find the practice of the law affect my taste for domestic pleasures; on the contrary, it stimulated and preserved them. After toiling a whole morning in the courts, it was a sweet reprieve to be allowed to hurry off to my quiet cottage, and hear the one dear voice of my household, and examine the quiet pictures. These never stunned me with clamors; I was never pestered by them to determine the *meum et tuum* between noisy disputants, neither of whom is exactly right. There, my eye could repose on the sweetest scenes—scenes of beauty and freshness—the shady verdure of the woods, the rich variety of flowers, and pure, calm, transparent waters, hallowed by the meek glances of the matron moon. No creature could have been more gentle than my wife. She met me with a composed smile, equally bright and meek. I never heard a complaint from her lips. The evils of which other men complain —the complaints about servants, scoldings about delay or dinner—never reached my ears. The kindest solicitude that, in my fatigue, or amid the toils of a business of which wives can know little, and for which they make too little allowance, there should be nothing at home to make me irritable or give me disquiet, distinguished equally her sense and her affection. If it became her duty to communicate any unpleasant intelligence—any tidings which might awaken anger or impatience—she carefully waited for the proper time, when the excitement of my blood was overcome, and repose of blood and brain had naturally brought about a kindred composure of mind.

Our afternoons were usually spent in the shade of the garden

or piazza. Sometimes, I sat by her while she was sketching. At others, she helped me to dress and train my garden-vines. Now and then we renewed our rambles of the morning, heedfully observing the different aspects of the same scenes and objects, which had then delighted us, under the mellowing smiles of the sun at its decline. With books, music, and chess, our evenings passed away without our consciousness; and day melted into night, and night departed and gave place to the new-born day, as quietly as if life had, in truth, become to us a great instrument of harmony, which bore us over the smooth seas of Time, to the gentle beating of fairy and unseen minstrelsy. Truly, then, we were two happy children. The older children of this world, stimulated by stronger tastes and more lofty indulgences, may smile at the infantile simplicity of such resources and modes of enjoyment. They were childish, but perhaps not the less wise for that. Infancy lies very near to heaven. Childhood is a not unfit study for angels; and happy were it for us could we maintain the hearts and the hopes of that innocent period for a longer day within our bosoms. In our world we grow too fast, too presumptuously. We live on too rich food, moral and intellectual. The artifices of our tastes prove most fatally the decline of our reason. But, for us—we two linked hearts, so segregated from all beside—we certainly lived the lives of children for a while. But we were not to live thus always. In some worldly respects, *I* was still a child: I cared little for its pomps, its small honors, its puny efforts, its tinselly displays. But I had vices of mind—vices of my own—sufficient to embitter the social world where all seems now so sweet—where all, in truth, *was* sweet, and pure, and worthy—and which might, under other circumstances, have been kept so to the last. I am now to describe a change!

CHAPTER XVII.

THE EVIL PRINCIPLE.

HERETOFORE, I have spoken of the blind hearts of others—of Mr. Clifford and his wilful wife—I have yet said little to show the blindness of my own. This task is now before me, and, with whatever reluctance, the exhibition shall resolutely be made. I have described a couple newly wed—eminently happy—blessed with tolerable independence—resources from without and within—dwelling in the smiles of Heaven, and not uncheered by the friendly countenance of man. I am to display the cloud, which hangs small at first, a mere speck, but which is to grow to a gloomy tempest that is to swallow up the loveliness of the sky, and blacken with gloom and sorrow the fairest aspects of the earth. I am to show the worm in the bud which is to bring blight—the serpent in the garden which is to spoil the Eden. Wo, beyond all other woes, that this serpent should be engendered in one's own heart, producing its blindness, and finally working its bane! Yet, so it is! The story is a painful one to tell; the task is one of self-humiliation. But the truth may inform others—may warn, may strengthen, may save—before their hearts shall be utterly given up to that blindness which must end in utter desperation and irretrievable overthrow.

If the reader has not been utterly unmindful of certain moral suggestions which have been thrown out passingly in my previous narrative, he will have seen that, constitutionally, I am of an ardent, impetuous temper—an active mind, ready, earnest, impatient of control—seeking the difficult for its own sake, and delighting in the conquest which is unexpected by others.

Such a nature is usually frank and generous It believes in

the affections — it depends upon them. It freely gives its own, but challenges the equally free and spontaneous gift of yours in return. It has little faith in the things which fill the hearts of the mere worldlings. Worldly honors may delight it, but not worldly toys. It has no veneration for gewgaws. The shows of furniture and of dress it despises. The gorgeous equipage is an encumbrance to it; the imposing jewel it would not wear, lest it might subtract something from that homage which it prefers should be paid to the wearer. It is all selfish — thoroughly selfish — but not after the world's fashion of selfishness. It hoards nothing, and gives quite as much as it asks. What does it ask? What? It asks for love — devoted attachment; the homage of the loved one and the friends; the implicit confidence of all around it! Ah! can anything be more exacting? Cruelly exacting, if it be not worthy of that it asks!

Imagine such a nature, denied from the beginning! The parents of its youth are gone! — the brother and the sister — the father and the friend! It is destitute, utterly, of these! It is also destitute of those resources of fortune which are supposed to be sufficient to command them. It is thrown upon the protection, the charge of strangers. Not strangers — no! From strangers, perhaps, but little could be expected. It is thrown upon the care of relatives — a father's brother! Could the tie be nearer? Not well! But it had been better if strangers had been its guardians. Then it might have learned to endure more patiently. At least, it would have felt less keenly the pangs inflicted by neglect, contumely, injustice. In this situation it grows up, like some sapling torn from its parent forest, its branches hacked off, its limbs lacerated! It grows up in a stranger-soil. The sharp winds assail it from every quarter. But still it lives — it grows. It grows wildly, rudely, ungracefully; but it is strong and tough, in consequence of its exposure and its trials. Its vitality increases with every collision which shakes and rends it; until, in the pathetic language of relatives unhappily burdened with such encumbrances, "it seems impossible to kill it!"

I will not say that mine tried to kill me, but I do say that they took precious little care that I was not killed. The effect upon my body was good, however — the effect of their indiffer-

ence. This roughening process is a part of physical training which very few parents understand. It is essential—should be insisted on—but it must not be accompanied with a moral roughening, which forces upon the mind of the pupil the conviction that the ordeal is meant for his destruction rather than for his good. There will be a recoil of the heart—a cruel recoil from the humanities—if such a conviction once fills the mind. It was this recoil which I felt! With warm affections seeking for objects of love—with feelings of hope and veneration, imploring for altars to which to attach themselves—I was commanded to go alone. The wilderness alone was open to me: what wonder if my heart grew wild and capricious even as that of the savage who dwells only amid their cheerless recesses? With a smile judiciously bestowed—with a kind word, a gentle tone, an occasional voice of earnest encouragement—my uncle and aunt might have fashioned my heart at their pleasure. I should have been as clay in the hands of the potter—a pliant willow in the grasp of the careful trainer. A nature constituted like mine is, of all others, the most flexible; but it is also, of all others, the most resisting and incorrigible. Approach it with a judicious regard to its affections, and you do with it what you please. Let it but fancy that it is the victim of your injustice, however slight, and the war is an interminable one between you!

Thus did I learn the first lessons of suspiciousness. They attended me to the schoolhouse; they governed and made me watchful there. The schoolhouse, the play-places—the very regions of earnest faith and unlimited confidence—produced no such effects in me. They might have done so, had I ceased, on going to school, to see my relatives any longer. But the daily presence of my uncle and aunt, with their system of continued injustice, at length rendered my suspicious moods habitual. I became shy. I approached nobody, or approached them with doubt and watchfulness. I learned, at the earliest period, to look into character, to analyze conduct, to pry into the mysterious involutions of the working minds around me. I traced, or fancied that I traced, the performance to the unexpressed and secret motive in which it had its origin. I discovered, or believed that I discovered, that the world was divided into ban-

ditti and hypocrites. At that day I made little allowance for the existence of that larger class than all, who happen to be the victims. Unless this were the larger class, the other two must very much and very rapidly diminish. My infant philosophy did not carry me very deeply into the recesses of my own heart. It was enough that I felt some of its dearest rights to be outraged—I did not care to inquire whether it was altogether right itself.

At length, there was a glimpse of dawn amid all this darkness. The world was not altogether evil. All hearts were not shut against me; and in the sweet smiles of Julia Clifford, in her kind attentions, soothing assurances, and fond entreaties, there was opportunity, at last, for my feelings to overflow. Like a mountain-stream long pent up, which at length breaks through its confinements, my affections rushed into the grateful channel which her pliant heart afforded me. They were wild, and strong, and devoted, in proportion to their long denial and restraint. Was it not natural enough that I should love with no ordinary attachment—that my love should be an impetuous torrent—all-devoted—struggling, striving—rushing only in the one direction—believing, in truth, that there was none other in the world in which to run?

This was a natural consequence of the long sophistication of my feelings. I knew nothing of the world—of society. I had shared in none of its trusts; I had only felt its exactions. Like some country-boy, or country-girl, for the first time brought into the great world, I surrendered myself wholly to the first gratified impulse. I made no conditions, no qualifications. I set all my hopes of heart upon a single cast of the die, and did not ask what might be the consequences if the throw was unfortunate.

One of the good effects of a free communication of the young with society is, to lessen the exacting nature of the affections. People who live too much to themselves—in their own centre, and for their own single objects—become fastidious to disease. They ask too much from their neighbors. Willing to surrender their *own* affections at a glance, they fancy the world wanting in sensibility when they find that their readiness in this respect fails to produce a corresponding readiness in others. This is

the natural history of that enthusiasm which is thrown back upon itself and is chilled by denial. The complaint of coldness and selfishness against the world is very common among very young or very inexperienced men. The world gets a bad character, simply because it refuses to lavish its affections along the highways — simply because it is cautious in giving its trusts, and expects proofs of service and actual sympathy rather than professions. Men like myself, of a warm, impetuous nature, complain of the heartlessness of mankind. They fancy themselves peculiarly the victims of an unkind destiny in this respect; and finally cut their throats in a moment of frenzy, or degenerate into a cynicism that delights in contradictions, in sarcasms, in self-torture, and the bitterest hostility to their neighbors.

Society itself is the only and best corrective of this unhappy disposition. The first gift to the young, therefore, should be the gift of society. By this word society, however, I do not mean a set, a clique, a pitiable little circle. Let the sphere of movement be sufficiently extended — as large as possible — that the means of observation and thought may be sufficiently comprehensive, and no influences from one man or one family shall be suffered to give the bias to the immature mind and inexperienced judgment. In society like this, the errors, prejudices, weaknesses, of one man, are corrected by a totally opposite form of character in another. The mind of the youth hesitates. Hesitation brings circumspection, watchfulness; watchfulness, discrimination; discrimination, choice; and a capacity to choose implies the attainment of a certain degree of deliberateness and judgment with which the youth may be permitted to go upon his way, supposed to be provided for in the difficult respect of being able henceforward to take care of himself.

I had no society — knew nothing of society — saw it at a distance, under suspicious circumstances, and was myself an object of its suspicion. Its attractions were desirable to me, but seemed unattainable. It required some sacrifices to obtain its *entrée*, and these sacrifices were the very ones which my independence would not allow me to make. My independence was my treasure, duly valued in proportion to the constant strife by which it was assailed. I had that! *That* could not be taken from me. *That* kept me from sinking into the slave,

the tool, the sycophant, perhaps the brute; *that* prompted me to hard study in secret places; *that* strengthened my heart, when, desolate and striving against necessity, I saw nothing of the smiles of society, and felt nothing of the bounties of life. Then came my final emancipation — my success — my triumph! My independence was assailed no longer. My talents were no longer doubted or denied. My reluctant neighbors sent in their adhesion. My uncle forbore his sneers. Lastly, and now — Julia was mine! My heart's desires were all gratified as completely as my mind's ambition!

Was I happy? The inconsiderate mind will suppose this very probable — will say, I should be. But evil seeds that are planted in the young heart grow up with years — not so rapidly or openly as to offend — and grow to be poisonous weeds with maturity. My feelings were too devoted, too concentrative, too all-absorbing, to leave me happy, even when they seemed gratified. The man who has but a single jewel in the world, is very apt to labor under a constant apprehension of its loss. He who knows but one object of attachment — whose heart's devotion turns evermore but to one star of all the countless thousands in the heavens — wo is he, if that star be shrouded from his gaze in the sudden overflow of storms! — still more wo is he, when that star withdraws, or seems to withdraw, its corresponding gaze, or turns it elsewhere upon another worshipper! See you not the danger which threatened me? See you not that, never having been beloved before — never having loved but the one — I loved that one with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my strength; and required from that one the equal love of heart, soul, strength? See you not that my love — linked with impatient mind, imperious blood, impetuous enthusiasm, and suspicious fear — was a devotion exacting as the grave — searching as fever — as jealous of the thing whose worship it demands as God is said to be of ours?

Mine was eminently a jealous heart! On this subject of jealousy, men rarely judge correctly. They speak of Othello as jealous — Othello, one of the least jealous of all human natures! Jealousy is a quality that needs no cause. It makes its own cause. It will find or make occasion for its exercise, in the most innocent circumstances. The *proofs* that made

Othello wretched and revengeful, were sufficient to have deceived any jury under the sun. He had proofs. He had a strong case to go upon. It would have influenced any judgment. He did not seek or find these proofs for himself. He did not wish to find them. He was slow to see them. His was not jealousy. His error was that of pride and self-esteem. He was outraged in both. His mistake was in being too prompt of action in a case which admitted of deliberation. This was the error of a proud man, a soldier, prompt to decide, prompt to act, and to punish if necessary. But never was human character less marked by a jealous mood than that of Othello. His great self-esteem was, of itself, a sufficient security against jealousy Mine might have been, had it not been so terribly diseased by ill-training.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PRESENTIMENTS.

WITHOUT apprehending the extent of my own weakness, the forms that it would take, or the tyrannies that it would inflict, I was still not totally uninformed on the subject of my peculiar character; and, fearing then rather that I might pain my wife by some of its wanton demonstrations, than that she would ever furnish me with an occasion for them, I took an opportunity, a few evenings after our marriage, to suggest to her the necessity of regarding my outbreaks with an indulgent eye.

My heart had been singularly softened by the most touching associations. We sat together in our piazza, beneath a flood of the richest and balmiest moonlight, screened only from its silvery blaze by interposing masses of the woodbine, mingled with shoots of oleander, arbor-vitæ, and other shrub-trees. The mild breath of evening sufficed only to lift quiveringly their green leaves and glowing blossoms, to stir the hair upon our cheeks, and give to the atmosphere that wooing freshness which seems so necessary a concomitant of the moonlight. The hand of Julia was in mine. There were few words spoken between us; love has its own sufficing language, and is content with that consciousness that all is right which implores no other assurances. Julia had just risen from the piano: we had both been touched with a deeper sense of the thousand harmonies in nature, by listening to those of Rossini; and now, gazing upon some transparent, fleecy, white clouds that were slowly pressing forward in the path of the moonlight, as if in duteous attendance upon some maiden queen, our mutual minds were busied in framing pictures from the fine yet fantastic forms that glowed, gathering on our gaze. I felt the hand of Julia trembling in

my own. Her head sank upon my shoulder; I felt a warm drop fall from her eyes upon my hand, and exclaimed—

"Julia, you weep! wherefore do you weep, dear wife?"

"With joy, my husband! My heart is full of joy. I am so happy, I can only weep. Ah! tears alone speak for the true happiness."

"Ah! would it last, Julia—would it last!"

"Oh, doubt not that it will last. Why should it not? What have we to fear?"

Mine was a serious nature. I answered sadly, if not gloomily:—

"Because it is a joy of life that we feel, and it must share the vicissitudes of life."

"True, true, but love is a joy of eternal life as well as of this."

There was a beautiful and consoling truth in this one little sentence, which my self-absorption was too great, at the time, to suffer me to see. Perhaps even she herself was not fully conscious of the glorious and pregnant truth which lay at the ottom of what she said. Love is, indeed, not merely *a* joy of eternal life: it is *the* joy of eternal life!—its particular joy—a dim shadow of which we sometimes feel in this—pure, lasting, comparatively perfect, the more it approaches, in its performances and its desires, the divine essence, of which it is so poor a likeness. We should so live, so love, as to make the one run into the other, even as a small river runs down, through a customary channel, into the great deeps of the sea. Death should be to the affections a mere channel through which they pass into a natural, a necessary condition, where their streams flow with more freedom, and over which, harmoniously controlling, as powerful, the spirit of love broods ever with "dovelike wings outspread." I answered, still gloomily, in the customary world commonplaces:—

"We must expect the storm. It will not be moonlight always. We must look for the cloud. Age, sickness, death!—ah! do these not follow on our footsteps, ever unerring, certain always, but so often rapid? Soon, how soon, they haunt us in the happiest moments—they meet us at every corner! They never altogether leave us."

"Enough, dear husband. Dwell not upon these gloomy thoughts. Ah! why should you—*now?*'

"I will not; but there are others, Julia."

"What others? Evils?"

"Sadder evils yet than these."

"Oh, no!—I hope not."

"Coldness of the once warm heart. The chill of affection in the loved one. Estrangement—indifference!—ah, Julia!"

"Impossible, Edward! This can not, *must* not be, with us. You do not think that I could be cold to you; and you—ah! surely *you* will never cease to love me?"

"Never, I trust, never!"

"No! you must not—*shall* not. Oh, Edward, let me die first before such a fear should fill my breast. You I love, as none was loved before. Without your love, I am nothing. If I can not hang upon you, where can I hang?"

And she clung to me with a grasp as if life and death depended on it, while her sobs, as from a full heart, were insuppressible in spite of all her efforts.

"Fear nothing, dearest Julia: do you not believe that I love you?"

"Ah! if I did not, Edward—"

"It is with you always to make me love you. You are as completely the mistress of my whole heart as if it had acknowledged no laws but yours from the beginning."

"What am I to do, dear Edward?"

"Forbear—be indulgent—pity me and spare me!"

"What mean you, Edward?"

"That heart which is all and only yours, Julia, is yet, I am assured, a wilful and an erring heart! I feel that it is strange, wayward, sometimes unjust to others, frequently to itself. It is a cross-grained, capricious heart; you will find its exactions irksome."

"Oh, I know it better. You wrong yourself."

"No! In the solemn sweetness of this hour, dear Julia—now, while all things are sweet to our eyes, all things dear to our affections—I feel a chill of doubt and apprehension come over me. I am so happy—so unusually happy—that I can not feel sure that I am so—that my happiness will continue

long. I will try, on my own part, to do nothing by which to risk its loss. But I feel that I am too wilful, at times, to be strong in keeping a resolution which is so very necessary to our mutual happiness. You must help—you must strengthen me, Julia."

"Oh, yes! but how? I will do anything—be anything."

"I am capricious, wayward; at times, full of injustice. Love me not less that I am so—that I sometimes show this waywardness to you—that I sometimes do injustice to your love. Bear with me till the dark mood passes from my heart. I have these moods, or have had them, frequently. It may be—I trust it will be—that, blessed with your love, and secure in its possession, there will be no room in my heart for such ugly feelings. But I know not. They sometimes take supreme possession of me. They seize upon me in all places. They wrap my spirit as in a cloud. I sit apart. I scowl upon those around me. I feel moved to say bitter things—to shoot darts in defiance at every glance—to envenom every sentence which I speak. These are cruel moods. I have striven vainly to shake them off. They have grown up with my growth—have shared in whatever strength I have; and, while they embitter my own thoughts and happiness, I dread that they will fling their shadow upon yours!"

She replied with gayety, with playfulness, but there was an effort in it.

"Oh, you make the matter worse than it is. I suppose all that troubles you is the blues. But you will never have them again. When I see them coming on I will sit by you and sing to you. We will come out here and watch the evening; or you shall read to me, or we will ramble in the garden—or—a thousand things which shall make you forget that there was ever such a thing in the world as sorrow."

"Dear Julia—will you do this?"

"More—everything to make you happy." And she drew me closer in her embrace, and her lips with a tremulous, almost convulsive sweetness, were pressed upon my forehead; and clinging there, oh! how sweetly did she weep!

"You will tire of my waywardness—of my exactions. Ah! I shall force you from my side by my caprice."

"You can not, Edward, if you would," she replied, in mournful accents like my own, "I have no remedy against you! I have nobody now to whom to turn. Have *I* not driven all from my side — all but you?"

It was my task to soothe her now.

"Nay, Julia, be not you sorrowful. You must continue glad and blest, that you may conquer my sullen moods, my dark presentiments. When I tell you of the evils of my temper, I tell you of occasional clouds only. Heaven forbid that they should give an enduring aspect to our heavens!

She responded fervently to my ejaculation. I continued:—

"I have only sought to prepare you for the management of my arbitrary nature, to keep you from suffering too much, and sinking beneath its exactions. You will bear with me patiently. Forgive me for my evil hours. Wait till the storm has overblown; and find me your own, then, as much as before; and let me feel that you are still mine — that the tempest has not separated our little vessels."

"Will I not? Ah! do not fear for me, Edward. It is a happiness for me to weep here — here, in your arms. When you are sad and moody, I will come as now."

"What if I repulse you?"

"You will not — no, no! — you will not."

"But if I do? Suppose——"

"Ah! it is hard to suppose that. But I will not heed it. I will come again."

"And again?"

"And again!"

"Then you will conquer, Julia. I feel that you will conquer! You will drive out the devils. Surely, then, I shall be incorrigible no longer."

Such was my conviction then. I little knew myself.

CHAPTER XIX.

DISTRUST.

I LITTLE knew myself! This knowledge of one's self is the most important knowledge, which very few of us acquire. We seldom look into our own hearts for other objects than those which will administer to their petty vanities and passing triumphs. Could we only look there sometimes for the truth! But we are blind—blind all! In some respects I was one of the blindest!

I have given a brief glimpse of our honeymoon. Perhaps, as the world goes, the picture is by no means an attractive one. Quiet felicity forms but a small item in the sources of happiness, now-a-days, among young couples. Mine was sufficiently quiet and sufficiently humble. One would suppose that he who builds so lowly should have no reason to apprehend the hurricane. Social ambition was clearly no object with either of us. We sighed neither for the glitter nor the regards of fashionable life. Neither upon fine houses, jewels, or equipages, did we set our hearts. For the pleasures of the table I had no passion, and never was young woman so thoroughly regardless of display as Julia Clifford. To be let alone—to be suffered to escape in our own way, unharming, unharmed, through the dim avenues of life—was assuredly all that we asked from man. Perhaps—I say it without cant—this, perhaps, was all that we possibly asked from heaven. This was all that *I* asked, at least, and this was much. It was asking what had never yet been accorded to humanity. In the vain assumption of my heart I thought that my demands were moderate.

Let no man console himself with the idea that his chances of success are multiplied in degree with the insignificance, or seeming insignificance, of his aims. Perhaps the very reverse of this

is the truth. He who seeks for many objects of enjoyment—whose tastes are diversified—has probably the very best prospect that some of them may be gratified. He is like the merchant whose ventures on the sea are divided among many vessels. He may lose one or more, yet preserve the main bulk of his fortune from the wreck. But he who has only a single bark—one freightage, however costly—whose whole estate is invested in the one venture—let him lose that, and all is lost. It does not matter that his loss, speaking relatively, is but little. Suppose his shipment, in general estimation, to be of small value. The loss to him is so much the greater. It was the dearer to him because of its insignificance, and being all that he had; is quite as conclusive of his ruin, as would be the foundering of every vessel which the rich merchant sent to sea.

I was one of these petty traders. I invested my whole capital of the affections in one precious jewel. Did I lose it, or simply fear its loss? Time must show. But, of a truth, I felt as the miser feels with his hoarded treasure. While I watched its richness and beauty, doubts and dread beset me. Was it safe? Everything depended upon its security. Thieves might break in and steal. Enough, for the present, to say, that much of my security, and of the security of all who, like me, possess a dear treasure, depends upon our convictions of security. He who apprehends loss, is already robbed. The reality is scarcely worse than the hourly anticipation of it.

My friends naturally became the visiters of my family. Certain of the late Mrs. Clifford's friends were also ours. Our circle was sufficiently large for those who already knew how to distinguish between the safe pleasures of a small set, and the horse-play and heartless enjoyments of fashionable jams. Were we permitted in this world to live only for ourselves, we should have been perfectly gratified had this been even less. We should have been very well content to have gone on from day to day without ever beholding the shadow of a stranger upon our threshold.

This was not permitted, however. We had a round of congratulatory visits. Among those who came, the first were the old, long-tried friends to whom I owed so much—the Edgertons. No family could have been more truly amiable than this; and

William Edgerton was the most amiable of the family. I have already said enough to persuade the reader that he was a very worthy man. He was more. He was a principled one. Not very highly endowed, perhaps, he was yet an intelligent gentleman. None could be more modest in expression — none less obtrusive in deportment — none more generous in service. The defects in his character were organic — not moral. He had no vices — no vulgarities. But his temperament was an inactive one. He was apt to be sluggish, and when excited was nervous. He was not irritable, but easily discomposed. His tastes were active at the expense of his genius. With ability, he was yet unperforming. His standards were morbidly fastidious. Fearing to fall below them, he desisted until the moment of action was passed for ever; and the feeling of his own weakness, in this respect, made him often sad, but to do him justice, never querulous.

With a person so constituted, the delicate tastes and sensibilities are like to be indulged in a very high degree. William Edgerton loved music and all the quiet arts. Painting was his particular delight. He himself sketched with great spirit. He had the happy eye for the *tout ensemble* in a fine landscape. He knew exactly how much to take in and what to leave out, in the delineation of a lovely scene. This is a happy talent for discrimination which the ordinary artist does not possess. It is the capacity which, in the case of orators and poets, informs them of the precise moment when they should stop. It is the happiest sort of judgment, since, though the artist may be neither very excellent in drawing, nor very felicitous in color, it enables him always to bestow a certain propriety on his picture which compensates, to a certain degree, for inferiority in other respects. To know how to grasp objects with spirit, and bestow them with a due regard to mutual dependence, is one of the most exquisite faculties of the landscape-painter.

William Edgerton, had he been forced by necessity to have made the art of painting his profession would have made for himself a reputation of no inferior kind. But amateur art, like amateur literature, rarely produces any admirable fruits. Complete success only attends the devotee to the muse. The worship must be exclusive at her altar; the attendance constant and unremit-

ting. There must be no partial, no divided homage. She is a jealous mistress, like all the rest. The lover of her charms, if he would secure her smiles, must be a *professor* at her shrine. He can not come and go at pleasure. She resents such impertinence by neglect. In plain terms, the fine arts must be made a business by those who desire their favor. Like law, divinity, physic, they constitute a profession of their own; require the same diligent endeavor, close study, fond pursuit! William Edgerton loved painting, but his business was the law. He loved painting too much to love his profession. He gave too much of his time to the law to be a successful painter—too much time to painting to be a lawyer. He was nothing! At the bar he never rose a step after the first day, when, together, we appeared in our mutual maiden case; and contenting himself with the occasional execution of a landscape, sketchy and bold, but without finish, he remained in that nether-land of public consideration, unable to grasp the certainties of either pursuit at which he nevertheless was constantly striving; striving, however, with that qualified degree of effort, which, if it never could secure the prize, never could fatigue him much with the endeavor to do so.

He was perfectly delighted when he first saw some of the sketches of my wife. He had none of that little jealousy which so frequently impairs the temper and the worth of amateurs. He could admire without prejudice, and praise without reserve. He praised them. He evidently admired them. He sought every occasion to see them, and omitted none in which to declare his opinion of their merits. This, in the first pleasant season of my marriage—when the leaves were yet green and fresh upon the tree of love—was grateful to my feelings. I felt happy to discover that my judgment had not erred in the selection of my wife. I stimulated her industry that I might listen to my friend's eulogy. I suggested subjects for her pencil. I fitted up an apartment especially as a studio for her use. I bought her some fine studies, lay figures, heads in marble and plaster; and lavished, in this way, the small surplus fund which had heretofore accrued from my professional industry, and that personal frugality with which it was accompanied.

William Edgerton was now for ever at our house. He

brought his own pictures for the inspection of my wife. He sometimes painted in her studio. He devised rural and aquatic parties with sole reference to landscape scenery and delineation; and indifferent to the law always, he now abandoned himself almost entirely to those tastes which seemed to have acquired of a sudden, the strangest and the strongest impulse.

In this—at least for a considerable space of time—I saw nothing very remarkable. I knew his tastes previously. I had seen how little disposed he was to grapple earnestly with the duties of his profession; and did not conceive it surprising, that, with family resources sufficient to yield him pecuniary independence, he should surrender himself up to the luxurious influence of tastes which were equally lovely in themselves, and natural to the first desires of his mind. But when for days he was missed from his office—when the very hours of morning which are most religiously devoted by the profession to its ostensible if not earnest pursuit, were yielded up to the easel—and when, overlooking the boundaries which, according to the conventional usage, made such a course improper, he passed many of these mornings at my house, during my absence, I began to entertain feelings of disquietude.

For these I had then no name. The feelings were vague and indefinable, but not the less unpleasant. I did not fancy for a moment that I was wronged, or likely to be wronged, but I felt that he was doing wrong. Then, too, I had my misgivings of what the world would think! I did not fancy that he had any design to wrong me; but there seemed to me a cruel want of consideration in his conduct. But what annoyed me most was, that Julia should receive him at such periods He was thoughtless, enthusiastic in art, and thoughtless, perhaps, in consequence of his enthusiasm. But I expected that she should think for both of us in such a case. Women, alone, can be the true guardians of appearances where they themselves are concerned; and it was matter of painful surprise to me that she should not have asked herself the question: "What will the neighbors think, during my husband's absence, to see a stranger, a young man, coming to visit me with periodical regularity, morning after morning?"

That she did not ask herself this question should have been a very strong argument to show me that her thoughts were all innocent. But there is a terrible truth in what Cæsar said of his wife's reputation: "She must be free from suspicion." She must not only do nothing wrong, but she must not suffer or do anything which might incur the suspicion of wrong-doing. There is nothing half so sensible to the breath of calumny, as female reputation, particularly in regions of high civilization, where women are raised to an artificial rank of respect, which obviates, in most part, the obligations of their dependence upon man, but increases, in due proportion, some of their responsibilities to him. Poor Julia had no circumspection, because she had no feeling of evil. I believe she was purity itself; I equally believe that William Edgerton was quite incapable of evil design. But when I came from my office, the first morning that he had thus passed at my house in my absence, and she told me that he had been there, and how the time had been spent, I felt a pang, like a sharp arrow, suddenly rush into my brain. Julia had no reserve in telling me this fact. It was a subject she seemed pleased to dwell upon. She narrated with the earnest, unseeing spirit of a self-satisfied child, the sort of conversation which had taken place between them — praised Edgerton's taste, his delicacy, his subdued, persuasive manners, and showed herself as utterly unsophisticated as any Swiss mountain-girl who voluntarily yields the traveller a kiss, and tells her mother of it afterward. I listened with chilled manners and a troubled mind.

"You are unwell, Edward," she remarked tenderly, approaching and throwing her arms around my neck, as she perceived the gradual gathering of that cloud upon my brows.

"Why do you think so, Julia?"

"Oh, you look so sad — almost severe, Edward, and your words are so few and cold. Have I offended you, dear Edward?"

I was confused at this direct question. I felt annoyed, ashamed. I pleaded headache in justification of my manner — it did ache, and my heart, too, but not with the ordinary pang; and I felt a warm blush suffuse my cheek, as I yielded to the first suggestion which prompted me to deceive my wife.

A large leading step was thus taken, and progress was easy afterward.

Oh! sweet spirit of confidence, thou only true saint, more needful than all, to bind the ties of kindred and affection! why art thou so prompt to fly at the approach of thy cold, dark enemy, distrust? Why dost thou yield the field with so little struggle? Why, when the things, dearest to thee of all in the world's gift—its most valued treasure, its purest, sweetest, and proudest trophies—why, when these are the stake which is to reward thy courage, thy adherence, to compensate thee for trial, to console thee for loss and outrage—why is it that thou art so ready to despond of the cause so dear to thee, and forfeit the conquest by which alone thy whole existence is made sweet. This is the very suicide of self. Fearful of loss, we forsake the prize, which we have won; and hearkening to the counsel of a natural enemy, eat of that bitter fruit which banishes for ever from our lips the sweet savor which we knew before, and without which, no savor that is left is sweet.

CHAPTER XX.

PROGRESS OF THE EVIL SPIRIT.

If I felt so deeply annoyed at the first morning visit which William Edgerton paid to my wife, what was my annoyance when these visits became habitual. I was miserable but could not complain. I was ashamed of the language of complaint on such a subject. There is something very ridiculous in the idea of a jealous husband—it has always provoked the laughter of the world; and I was one of those men who shrunk from ridicule with a more than mortal dread. Besides, I really felt no alarm. I had the utmost confidence in my wife's virtue. I had not the less confidence in that of Edgerton. But I was jealous of her deference—of her regard—for another. She was, in my eyes, as something sacred, set apart—a treasure exclusively my own! Should it be that another should come to divide her veneration with me? I was vexed that she should derive satisfaction from another source than myself. This satisfaction she derived from the visits of Edgerton. She freely avowed it.

"How amiable—how pleasant he is," she would say, in the perfect innocence of her heart; "and really, Edward, he has so much talent!"

These praises annoyed me. They were as so much wormwood to my spirit. It must be remembered that I was not myself what the world calls an amiable man. I doubt if any, even of my best friends, would describe me as a pleasant one. I was a man of too direct and earnest a temperament to establish a claim, in reasonable degree, to either of these characteristics. I was, accordingly, something blunt in my address—the tones of my voice were loud—my manner was all *empressement*, except when I was actually angry, and then it was cold,

hard, dry, inflexible. I was the last person in the world to pass for an amiable. Now, Julia, on the other hand, was quiet, subdued, timorous — the tones of a strong, decided voice startled her — she shrunk from controversy — yielded always with a happy grace in anticipation of the conflict, and showed, in all respects, that nice, almost nervous organization which attaches the value of principles and morals to mere manners, and would be as much shocked, perhaps, at the expression of a rudeness, as at the commission of a sin. Not that such persons would hold a sin to be less criminal or innocuous than would we ourselves; but that they regard mere conduct as of so much more importance.

When, therefore, she praised William Edgerton for those qualities which I well knew I did not possess, I could not resist the annoyance. My self-esteem — continually active — stimulated as it had been by the constant moral strife, to which it had been subjected from boyhood — was continually apprehending disparagement. Of the purity of Julia's heart, and the chastity of her conduct, the very freedom of her utterance was conclusive. Had she felt one single improper emotion toward William Edgerton, her lips would never have voluntarily uttered his name, and never in the language of applause. On this head I had not then the slightest apprehension. It was not jealousy so much as *egoïsme* that was preying upon me. Whatever it was, however, it could not be repressed as I listened to the eulogistic language of my wife. I strove, but could not subdue, altogether, the evil spirit which was fast becoming predominant within me. Yet, though speaking under its immediate influence, I was very far from betraying its true nature. My *egoïsme* had not yet made such advances as to become reckless and incautious. I surprised her by my answer to her eulogies.

"I have no doubt he is amiable — he is amiable — but that is not enough for a man. He must be something more than amiable, if he would escape the imputation of being feeble — something more if he would be anything!"

Julia looked at me with eyes of profound and dilating astonishment. Having got thus far, it was easy to advance. The first step is half the journey in all such cases.

"William Edgerton is a little too amiable, perhaps, for his own good. It makes him listless and worthless. He will do nothing at pictures, wasting his time only when he should be at his business."

"But did I not understand you, Edward, that he was a man of fortune, and independent of his profession?" she answered timidly.

"Even that will not justify a man in becoming a trifler. No man should waste his time in painting, unless he makes a trade of it."

"But his leisure, Edward," suggested Julia, with a look of increasing timidity.

"His leisure, indeed, Julia;—but he has been here all day —day after day. If painting is such a passion with him, let him abandon law and take to it. But he should not pursue one art while professing another. It is as if a man hankered after that which he yet lacked the courage to challenge and pursue openly.'

"I don't think you love pictures as you used to, Edward," she remarked to me, after a little interval passed in unusual silence

"Perhaps it is because I have matters of more consequence to attend to *You* seem sufficiently devoted to them now to excuse my indifference."

'Surely, dear Edward, something I have done vexes you. Tell me, husband. Do not spare me. Say, in what have I offended?"

I had not the courage to be ingenuous. Ah! if I had!

'Nay, you have not offended," I answered hastily—"I am only worried with some unmanageable thoughts. The law, you know, is full of provoking, exciting, irritating necessities."

She looked at me with a kind but searching glance. My soul seemed to shrink from that scrutiny. My eyes sunk beneath her gaze.

"I wish I knew how to console you, Edward: to make you entirely happy. I pray for it, Edward. I thought we were always to be so happy. Did you not promise me that you would always leave your cares at your office—that our cottage should be sacred to love and peace only?"

She put her arms about my neck, and looked into my face with such a sweet, strange, persuasive smile — half mirth, half sadness — that the evil spirit was subdued within me. I clasped her fervently in my embrace, with all my old feelings of confidence and joy renewed. At this moment the servant announced Mr. Edgerton, and with a start — a movement — scarcely as gentle as it should have been, I put the fond and still beloved woman from my embrace!

CHAPTER XXI.

CHANGES OF HOME.

From this time my intercourse with William Edgerton was, on my part, one of the most painful and difficult constraint. I had nothing to reproach him with; no grounds whatever for quarrel; and could not, in his case—regarding the long intimacy which I had maintained with himself and father, and the obligations which were due from me to both—adopt such a manner of reserve and distance as to produce the result of indifference and estrangement which I now anxiously desired. I was still compelled to meet him—meet him, too, with an affectation of good feeling and good humor, which I soon found it, of all things in the world, the most difficult even to pretend. How much would I have given could he only have provoked me to anger on any ground—could he have given me an occasion for difference of any sort or to any degree—anything which could have justified a mutual falling off from the old intimacy! But William Edgerton was meekness and kindness itself. His confidence in me was of the most unobservant, suspicionless character; either that, or I succeeded better than I thought in the effort to maintain the external aspects of old friendship. He saw nothing of change in my deportment. He *seemed* not to see it, at least; and came as usual, or more frequently than usual, to my house, until, at length, the studio of my wife was quite as much his as hers—nay, more; for, after a brief space, whether it was that Julia saw what troubled me, or felt herself the imprudence of Edgerton's conduct, she almost entirely surrendered it to him. She was not now so often to be seen in it.

This proceeding alarmed me. I dreaded lest my secret should be discovered. I was shocked lest my wife should suppose me jealous. The feeling is one which carries with it a

sufficiently severe commentary, in the fact that most men are heartily ashamed to be thought to suffer from it. But, if it vexed me to think that she should know or suspect the truth, how much more was I troubled lest it should be seen or suspected by others! This fear led to new circumspection. I now affected levities of demeanor and remark; studiously absented myself from home of an evening, leaving my wife with Edgerton, or any other friend who happened to be present; and, though I began no practices of profligacy, such as are common to young scapegraces in all times, I yet, to some moderate extent. affected them.

A tone of sadness now marked the features of my wife. There was an expression of anxiety in her countenance, which, amid all her previous sufferings, I had never seen there before. She did not complain; but sometimes, when we sat alone together, I reading, perhaps, and she sewing, she would drop her work in her lap, and sigh suddenly and deeply, as if the first shadows of the upgathering gloom were beginning to cloud her young and innocent spirit, and force her apprehensions into utterance. This did not escape me, but I read its signification, as witches are said to read the Bible, backward. A gloomier fancy filled my brain as I heard her unconscious sigh.

"It is the language of regret. She laments our marriage. She could have found another, surely, who could have made her happier. Perhaps, had Edgerton and herself known each other intimately before!—"

Dark, perverse imagining! It crushed me. I felt, I can not tell, what bitterness. Let no one suppose that I endured less misery than I inflicted. The miseries of the damned could not have exceeded mine in some of the moments when these cruel conjectures filled my mind. Then followed some such proofs as as these of the presence of the Evil One:—

"You sigh, Julia. You are unhappy."

"Unhappy? no, dear Edward, not unhappy! What makes you think so?"

"What makes you sigh, then?"

"I do not know. I am certainly not unhappy. Did I sigh, Edward?"

"Yes, and seemingly from the very bottom of your heart. I

fear, Julia, that you are not happy; nay, I am sure you are not! I feel that I am not the man to make you happy. I am a perverse—"

"Nay, Edward, now you speak so strangely, and your brow is stern, and your tones tremble! What can it be afflicts you? You are angry at something, dear Edward. Surely, it can not be with me."

"And if it were, Julia, I am afraid it would give you little concern."

"Now, Edward, you are cruel. You do me wrong. You do yourself wrong. Why should you suppose that it would give me little concern to see you angry? So far from this, I should regard it as the greatest misery which I had to suffer. Do not speak so, dearest Edward—do not fancy such things. Believe me, my husband, when I tell you that I know nothing half so dear to me as your love—nothing that I would not sacrifice with a pleasure, to secure, to preserve *that!*"

"Ah! would you give up painting?"

"Painting! that were a small sacrifice! I worked at it only because you used to like it."

"What, you think I do not like it now?"

"I *know* you do not."

"But you paint still?"

"No! I have not handled brush or pencil for a week. Mr. Edgerton was reproaching me only yesterday for my neglect."

"Ah, indeed! Well, you promised him to resume, did you not? He is a rare persuader! He is so amiable, so mild—you could not well resist."

It was from her face that I formed a rational conjecture of the expression that must have appeared in mine. Her eyes dilated with a look of timid wonder, not unmixed with apprehension. She actually shrunk back a space; then, approaching, laid her hand upon my wrist, as she exclaimed:—

"God of heaven, Edward, what strange thought is in your bosom? what is the meaning of that look? Look not so again, if you would not kill me!"

I averted my face from hers, but without speaking. She threw her arms around my neck.

"Do not turn away from me, Edward. Do not, do not, I

entreat you! You must not—no! not till you tell me what is troubling you—not till I soothe you, and make you love me again as much as you did at first."

When I turned to her again, the tears—hot, scalding tears—were already streaming down my cheeks.

"Julia, God knows I love you! Never woman yet was more devotedly loved by man! I love you too much—too deeply—too entirely! Alas, I love nothing else!"

"Say not that you love me too much—that can not be! Do I not love you—you only, you altogether? Should I not have your whole love in return?"

"Ah, Julia! but my love is a convulsive eagerness of soul—a passion that knows no limit! It is not that my heart is entirely yours: it is that it is yours with a frenzied desperation. There is a fanaticism in love as in religion. My love is that fanaticism. It burns—it commands—where yours would but soothe and solicit."

"But is mine the less true—the less valuable for this, dear Edward?"

"No, perhaps not! It may be even more true, more valuable; it may be only less intense. But fanaticism, you know, is exacting—nothing more so. It permits no half-passion, no moderate zeal. It insists upon devotion like its own. Ah, Julia, could you but love as I do!"

"I love you all, Edward, all that I can, and as it belongs to my nature to love. But I am a woman, and a timid one, you know. I am not capable of that wild passion which you feel. Were I to indulge it, it would most certainly destroy me. Even as it sometimes appears in you, it terrifies and unnerves me. You are so impetuous!"

"Ah, you would have only the meek, the amiable!"

And thus, with an implied sarcasm, our conversation ended. Julia turned on me a look of imploring, which was naturally one of reproach. It did not have its proper influence upon me. I seized my hat, and hurried from the house. I rushed, rather than walked, through the streets; and, before I knew where I was, I found myself on the banks of the river, under the shade of trees, with the soft evening breeze blowing upon me, and the placid moon sailing quietly above. I threw myself down upon

the grass, and delivered myself up to gloomy thoughts. Here was I, then, scarcely twenty-five years old; young, vigorous; with a probable chance of fortune before me; a young and lovely wife, the very creature of my first and only choice, one whom I tenderly loved, whom, if to seek again, I should again, and again, and only, seek! Yet I was miserable—miserable in the very possession of my first hopes, my best joys—the very treasure that had always seemed the dearest in my sight. Miserable blind heart! miserable indeed! For what was there to make me miserable? Absolutely nothing—nothing that the outer world could give—nothing that it could ever take away. But what fool is it that fancies there must be a reason for one's wretchedness? The reason is in our own hearts; in the perverseness which can make of its own heaven a hell! not often fashion a heaven out of hell!

Brooding, I lay upon the sward, meditating unutterable things, and as far as ever from any conclusion. Of one thing alone I was satisfied—that I was unutterably miserable; that my destiny was written in sable; that I was a man foredoomed to wo! Were my speculations strange or unnatural! Unnatural indeed! There is a class of surface-skimming persons, who pronounce all things unnatural which, to a cool, unprovoked, and perhaps unprovokable mind, appear unreasonable: as if a vexed nature and exacting passions were not the most unreasonable yet most natural of all moral agents. My woes may have been groundless, but it was surely not unnatural that *I* felt and entertained them.

Thus, with bitter mood, growing more bitter with every moment of its unrestrained indulgence, I gloomed in loneliness beside the banks of that silvery and smooth-flowing river. Certainly the natural world around me lent no color to my fancies. While all was dark within, all was bright without. A fiend was tugging at my heart; while from a little white cottage, a few hundred yards below, which grew flush with the margin of the stream, there stole forth the tender, tinkling strains of a guitar, probably touched by fair fingers of a fair maiden, with some enamored boy, blind and doting, hovering beside her. I, too, had stood thus and hearkened thus, and where am I—what am I!

I started to my feet. I found something offensive in the music. It came linked with a song which I had heard Julia sing a hundred times; and when I thought of those hours of confidence, and felt myself where I was, alone—and how lone!—bitterer than ever were the wayward pangs which were preying upon the tenderest fibres of my heart.

In the next moment I ceased to be alone. I was met and jostled by another person as I bounded forward, much too rapidly, in an effort to bury myself in the deeper shadow of some neighboring trees. The stranger was nearly overthrown in the collision, which extorted a hasty exclamation from his lips, not unmingled with a famous oath or two. In the voice I recognised that of my friend Kingsley—the well-known pseudo-Kentucky gentleman, who had acted a part so important in extricating my wife from her mother's custody. I made myself known to him in apologizing for my rudeness.

"You here!" said he; "I did not expect to meet you. I have just been to your house, where I found your wife, and where I intended to stop a while and wait for you. But Bill Edgerton, in the meanwhile, popped in, and after that I could hear nothing but pictures and paintings, Madonnas, Ecce Homos, and the like; till I began to fancy that I smelt nothing but paint and varnish. So I popped out, with a pretty blunt excuse, leaving the two amateurs to talk in oil and water-colors, and settle the principles of art as they please. Like you, I fancy a real landscape, here, by the water, and under the green trees, in preference to a thousand of their painted pictures."

It may be supposed that my mood underwent precious little improvement after this communication. Dark conceits, darker than ever, came across my mind. I longed to get away, and return to that home from which I had banished confidence!—ah, only too happy if there still lingered hope! But my friend, blunt, good-humored, and thoughtless creature as he was, took for granted that I had come to look at the landscape, to admire water-views by moonlight, and drink fresh draughts of sea-breeze from the southwest; and, thrusting his arm through mine, he dragged me on, down, almost to the threshold of the cottage, whence still issued the tinkle, tinkle, of the guitar which had first driven me away.

"That girl sings well. Do you know her—Miss Davison? She's soon to be married, *they* say (d—n 'they say,' however—the greatest scandal-monger, if not mischief-maker and liar, in the world!)—she is soon to be married to young Trescott—a clever lad who sniffles, plays on the flute, wears whisker and imperial on the most cream-colored and effeminate face you ever saw! A good fellow, nevertheless, but a silly! She is a good fellow, too, rather the cleverest of the twain, and perhaps the oldest. The match, if match it really is to be, none of the wisest for that very reason. The damsel, now-a-days, who marries a lad younger than herself, is laying up a large stock of pother, which is to bother her when she becomes thirty—for even young ladies, you know, after forty, may become thirty. A sort of dispensation of nature. She sings well, nevertheless."

I said something—it matters not what. Dark images of home were in my eyes. I heard no song—saw no landscape. The voice of Kingsley was a sort of buzzing in my ears.

"You are dull to-night, but that song ought to soothe you. What a cheery, light-hearted wench it is! Her voice does seem so to rise in air, shaking its wings, and crying tira-la! tira-la! with an enthusiasm which is catching! I almost feel prompted to kick up my heels, throw a summerset, and, while turning on my axis, give her an echo of tira-la! tira-la! tira-la! after her own fashion."

"You are certainly a happy, mad fellow, Kingsley!" was my faint, cheerless commentary upon a gayety of heart which I could not share, and the unreserved expression of which, at that moment, only vexed me.

"And you no glad one, Clifford. That song, which almost prompts me to dance, makes no impression on you! By-the-way, your wife used to sing so well, and now I never hear her That d——d painting, if you don't mind, will make her give up everything else! As for Bill Edgerton, he cares for nothing else but his varnish, trees, and umber-hills, and streaky water. You shouldn't let him fill your wife's mind with this oil-and-varnish spirit—giving up the piano, the guitar, and that sweeter instrument than all, her own voice. D—n the paintings!—his long talk on the subject almost makes me sick of everything like a picture. I now look upon a beautiful landscape like this,

as a thing that is shortly to be desecrated—taken in vain—scratched out of shape and proportion upon a deal-board, and colored after such a fashion as never before was seen in the natural world, upon, or under, or about this solid earth. D—n the pictures, I say again!—but, for God's sake, Clifford, don't let your wife give up the music! Make her play, even if she don't like it. She likes the painting best, but I wouldn't allow it! A wife is a sort of person that we set to do those things that we wish done and can't do for ourselves. That's my definition of a wife. Now, if I were in your place, with my present love for music and dislike of pictures, I'd put her at the piano, and put the paint-saucers, and the oil, and the smutted canvass, out of the window; and then—unless he came to his senses like other people—I'd thrust Bill Edgerton out after them! I'd never let the best friend in the world spoil my wife."

The effect of this random chatter of my good-natured friend upon my mind may well be imagined. It was fortunate that he was quite too much occupied in what he was saying to note my annoyance. In vain, anxious to be let off, was I restrained in utterance—cold, unpliable. The good fellow took for granted that it was an act of friendship to try to amuse; and thus, yearning with a nameless discontent and apprehension to get home, I was marched to and fro along the river-bank, from one scene to another—he, meanwhile, utterly heedless of time, and as actively bent on perpetual motion as if his sinews were of steel and his flesh iron. Meanwhile, the guitar ceased, and the song in the cottage of Miss Davison; the lights went out in that and all the other dwellings in sight; the moon waned; and it was not till the clock from a distant steeple tolled out the hour of eleven with startling solemnity, that Kingsley exclaimed:—

"Well, *mon ami*, we have had a ramble, and I trust I have somewhat dissipated your gloomy fit. And now to bed—what say you?—with what appetite we may!"

With what appetite, indeed! We separated. I rushed homeward, the moment he was out of sight—once more stood before my own dwelling. There the lights remained unextinguished, and William Edgerton was still a tenant of my parlor!

CHAPTER XXII.

SELF-HUMILIATION.

I HAD not the courage to enter my own dwelling! My heart sank within me. It was as if the whole hope of a long life, an intense desire, a keen unremitting pursuit, had suddenly been for ever baffled. Let no one who has not been in my situation; who has not been governed by like moral and social influences from the beginning; who knows not my sensibilities, and the organization — singular and strange it may be — of my mind and body; let no such person jump to the conclusion that there was any thing unnatural, however unreasonable and unreasoning, in the wild passion which possessed me. I look back upon it with some surprise myself. The fears which I felt, the sufferings I endured, however unreasonable, were yet true to my training. That training made me selfish; how selfish let my blindness show! In the blindness of self I could see nothing but the thing I feared, the one phantom — phantom though it were — which was sufficient to quell and crush all the better part of man within me, banish all the real blessings which were at command around me. I gave but a single second glance through the windows of my habitation, and then darted desperately away from the entrance! I bounded, without a consciousness, through the now still and dreary streets, and found myself, without intending it, once more beside the river, whose constant melancholy chidings, seemed the echoes — though in the faintest possible degree — of the deep waters of some apprehensive sorrow then rolling through all the channels of my soul.

What was it that I feared? What was it that I sought? Was it love? Can it be that the strange passion which we call by this name, was the source of that sad frenzy which filled and afflicted my heart? And was I not successful in my love? Had

I not found the sought?—won the withheld? What was denied to me that I desired? I asked of myself these questions. I asked them in vain. I could not answer them. I believe that I can answer now. It was sincerity, earnestness, devotion from her, all speaking through an intensity like that which I felt within my own soul.

Now, Julia lacked this earnestness, this intensity. Accustomed to submission, her manner was habitually subdued. Her strongest utterance was a tear, and that was most frequently hidden. She did not respond to me in the language in which my affections were wont to speak. Sincerity she did not lack —far from it—she was truth itself! It is the keener pang to my conscience now, that I am compelled to admit this conviction. Her modes of utterance were not less true than mine. They were not less significant of truth; but they were after a different fashion. In a moment of calm and reason, I might have believed this truth; nay, I knew it, even at those moments when I was most unjust. It was not the truth that I required so much as the presence of an attachment which could equal mine in its degree and strength. This was not in her nature. She was one taught to subdue her nature, to repress the tendencies of her heart, to submit in silence and in meekness. She had invariably done so until the insane urgency of her mother made her desperate. But for this desperation she had still submitted, perhaps, had never been my wife. In the fervent intensity of my own love, I fancied, from the beginning, that there was something too temperate in the tone of hers. Were I to be examined now, on this point, I should say that her deportment was one which declared the nicest union of sensibility and maidenly propriety. But, compared with mine, her passions were feeble, frigid. Mine were equally intense and exacting. Perhaps, had she even responded to my impetuosity with a like fervor, I should have recoiled from her with a feeling of disgust much more rapid and much more legitimate, than was that of my present frenzy.

Frenzy it was! and it led me to the performance of those things of which I shame to speak. But the truth, and its honest utterance now, must be one of those forms of atonement with which I may hope, perhaps vainly, to lessen, in the sight of Heaven, some of my human offences. I had scarcely reached

the water-side before a new impulse drove me back. You will scarcely believe me when I tell you that I descended to the base character of the spy upon my household. The blush is red on my cheek while I record the shameful error. I entered the garden, stole like a felon to the lattice of the apartment in which my wife sat with her guest, and looked in with a greedy fear, upon the features of the two!

What were my own features then? What the expression of my eyes? It was well that I could not see them; I felt that they must be frightful. But what did I expect to see in this espionage? As I live, honestly now, and with what degree of honesty I then possessed, I may truly declare that when I *thought* upon the subject at all, I had no more suspicion that my wife would be guilty of any gross crime, than I had of the guilt of the Deity himself. Far from it. Such a fancy never troubled me. But, what was it to me, loving as I did, exclusive, and selfish, and exacting as I was—what was it to me if, forbearing all crime of conduct, she yet regarded another with eyes of idolatry—if her mind was yielded up to him in deference and regard; and thoughts, disparaging to me, filled her brain with his superior worth, manners, merits? He had tastes, perhaps talents, which I had not. In the forum, in all the more energetic, more imposing performances of life, William Edgerton, I knew, could take no rank in competition with myself. But I was no ladies' man. I had no arts of society. My manners were even rude. My address was direct almost to bluntness. I had no discriminating graces, and could make no sacrifice, in that school of polish, where the delicacy is too apt to become false, and the performances trifling. It is idle to dwell on this; still more idle to speculate upon probable causes. It may be that there are persons in the world of both sexes, and governed by like influences, who have been guilty of like follies; to them my revelations may be of service. My discoveries, if I have made any, were quite too late to be of much help to me.

To resume, I prowled like a guilty phantom around my own habitation. I scanned closely, with the keenest eyes of jealousy, every feature, every movement of the two within. In the eyes of Edgerton, I beheld—I did not deceive myself in this—I beheld the speaking soul, devoted, rapt, full of love for the ob

ject of his survey. That he loved her was to me sufficiently clear. His words were few, faintly spoken, timid. His eyes did not encounter hers; but when hers were averted, they riveted their fixed glances upon her face with the adherence of the yearning steel for the magnet! Bitterly did I gnash my teeth—bitterly did my spirit rise in rebellion, as I noted these characteristics. But, vainly, with all my perversity of feeling and judgment, did I examine the air, the look, the action, the expression, the tones, the words of my wife, to make a like discovery. All was passionless, all seeming pure, in her whole conduct. She was gentle in her manner, kind in her words, considerate in her attentions; but so entirely at ease, so evidently unconscious, as well of improper thoughts in herself as of an improper tendency in him, that, though still resolute to be wilful and unhappy, I yet could see nothing of which I could reasonably complain. Nay, I fancied that there was a touch of listlessness, amounting to indifference, in her air, as if she really wished him to be gone; and, for a moment, my heart beat with a returning flood of tenderness, that almost prompted me to rush suddenly into the apartment and clasp her to my arms.

At length, Edgerton departed. When he rose to do so, I felt the awkwardness of my situation—the meanness of which I had been guilty—the disgrace which would follow detection. The shame I already felt; but, though sickening beneath it, the passion which drove me into the commission of so slavish an act, was still superior to all others, and could not then be overcome. I hurried from the window and from the premises while he was taking his leave. My mind was still in a frenzy. I rambled off, unconsciously, to the most secluded places along the suburbs, endeavoring to lose the thoughts that troubled me. I had now a new cause for vexation. I was haunted by a conviction of my own shame. How could I look Julia in the face—how meet and speak to her, and hear the accents of her voice and my own after the unworthy espionage which I had instituted upon her? Would not my eyes betray me—my faltering accents, my abashed looks, my flushed and burning cheeks? I felt that it was impossible for me to escape detection. I was sure that every look, every tone, would sufficiently betray my secret. Perhaps I should not have felt this fear, had I possessed the courage to

resolve against the repetition of my error. Could I have declared this resolution to myself, to forego the miserable proceeding which I had that night begun, I feel that I should then have taken one large step toward my own deliverance from that formidable fiend which was then raging unmastered in my soul. But I lacked the courage for this. Fatal deficiency! I felt impressed with the necessity of keeping a strict watch upon Edgerton. I had seen, with eyes that could not be deceived, the feeling which had been expressed in his. I saw that he loved her, perhaps, without a consciousness himself of the unhappy truth. I hurried to the conclusion, accordingly, that he must be looked after. I did not so immediately perceive that in looking after him, I was, in truth, looking after Julia; for what was my watch upon Edgerton but a watch upon her? I had not the confidence in her to leave her to herself. That was my error. The true reasoning by which a man in my situation should be governed, is comprised in a nutshell. Either the wife is virtuous or she is not. If she is virtuous, she is safe without my espionage. If she is not, all the watching in the world will not suffice to make her so. As for the discovery of her falsehood, he will make that fast enough. The security of the husband lies in his wife's purity, not in his own eyes. It must be added to this argument that the most virtuous among us, man or woman, is still very weak; and neither wife, nor daughter, nor son, should be exposed to unnecessary temptation. Do we not daily implore in our own prayers, to be saved from temptation?

I need not strive to declare what were my thoughts and feelings as I wandered off from my dwelling and place of espionage that night. No language of which I am possessed could embody to the idea of the reader the thousandth part of what I suffered. An insane and morbid resentment filled my heart. A close, heavy, hot stupor, pressed upon my brain. My limbs seemed feeble as those of a child. I tottered in the streets. The stars, bright mysterious watchers, seemed peering down into my face with looks of smiling inquiry. The sudden bark of a watch-dog startled and unnerved me. I felt with the consciousness of a mean action, all the humiliating weakness which belongs to it.

It took me a goodly hour before I could muster up courage to return home, and it was then midnight. Julia had retired to

her chamber, but not yet to her couch. She flew to me on my entrance—to my arms. I shrunk from her embraces; but she grasped me with greater firmness. I had never witnessed so much warmth in her before. It surprised me, but the solution of it was easy. My long stay had made her apprehensive. It was so unusual. My coldness, when she embraced me, was as startling to her, as her sudden warmth was surprising to me. She pushed me from her—still, however, holding me in her grasp, while she surveyed me. Then she started, and with newer apprehensions.

Well she might. My looks alarmed her. My hair was dishevelled and moist with the night-dews. My cheeks were very pale. There was a quick, agitated, and dilating fullness of my eyes, which rolled hastily about the apartment, never even resting upon her. They dared not. I caught a hasty glance of myself in the mirror, and scarcely knew my own features. It was natural enough that she should be alarmed. She clung to me with increased fervency. She spoke hurriedly, but clearly, with an increased and novel power of utterance, the due result of her excitement. Could that excitement be occasioned by love for me—by a suspicion of the truth, namely, that I had been watching her? I shuddered as this last conjecture passed into my mind. That, indeed, would be a humiliation—worse, more degrading, by far, than all.

"Oh, why have you left me—so long, so very long? where have you been? what has happened?"

"Nothing—nothing."

"Ah, but there is something, Edward. Speak! what is it, dear husband? I see it in your eyes, your looks! Why do you turn from me? Look on me! tell me! You are very pale, and your eyes are so wild, so strange! You are sick, dear Edward; you are surely sick: tell me, what has happened?"

Wild and hurried as they were, never did tones of more touching sweetness fall from any lips. They unmanned—nay, I use the wrong word—they *manned* me for the time. They brought me back to my senses, to a conviction of her truth, to a momentary conviction of my own folly. My words fell from me without effort—few, hurried, husky—but it was a sudden heart-gush, which was unrestrainable.

"Ask me not, Julia—ask me nothing; but love me, only love me, and all will be well—all is well."

"Do I not—ah! do I not love you, Edward?"

"I believe you—God be praised, I *do* believe you!"

"Oh, surely, Edward, you never doubted this."

"No, no!—never!"

Such was the fervent ejaculation of my lips; such, in spite of its seeming inconsistency, was the real belief within my soul. What was it, then, that I did doubt? wherefore, then, the misery, the suspense, the suspicion, which grew and gathered, corroding in my heart, the parent of a thousand unnamed anxieties? It will be difficult to answer. The heart of man is one of those strange creations, so various in its moods, so infinite in its ramifications, so subtle and sudden in its transitions, as to defy investigation as certainly as it refuses remedy and relief. It is enough to say that, with one schooled as mine had been, injuriously, and with injustice, there is little certainty in any of its movements. It becomes habitually capricious, feeds upon passions intensely, without seeming detriment; and, after a season, prefers the unwholesome nutriment which it has made vital, to those purer natural sources of strength and succor, without which, though it may still enjoy life, it can never know happiness.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PROGRESS OF PASSION.

"But, do not leave me another time—not so long, Edward. Do not leave me alone. Your business is one thing. *That* you must, of course, attend to; but hours—not of business—hours in which you do no business—hours of leisure—your evenings, Edward—these you must share with me—you must give to me entirely. Ah! will you not? will you not promise me?"

These were among the last words which she spoke to me ere we slept that night. The next morning, almost at awaking, she resumed the same language. I could not help perceiving that she spoke in tones of greater earnestness than usual—an earnestness expressive of anxiety for which I felt at some loss to account. Still, the tenor of what she said, at the time, gave me pleasure—a satisfaction which I did not seek to conceal, and which, while it lasted, was the sweetest of all pleasures to my soul. But the busy devil in my heart made his suggestions also, which were of a kind to produce any other but satisfying emotions. While I stood in my wife's presence—in the hearing of her angel-voice, and beholding the pure spirit speaking out from her eyes—he lay dormant, rebuked, within his prison-house, crouching in quiet, waiting a more auspicious moment for activity. Nor was he long in waiting; and then his cold, insinuating doubts—his inquiries—begot and startled mine!

"Very good—all very good!" Such was the tone of his suggestions. "She may well compound for the evenings with you, since she gives her whole mornings to your rival."

Archimedes asked but little for the propulsion of a world. The jealous spirit—a spirit jealous like mine—asks still less for the moving of that little but densely-populous world, the human heart. I forgot the sweet tones of my wife's words—

the pure-souled words themselves—tones and words which, while their sounds yet lingered in my ears, I could not have questioned—I did not dare to question. The tempter grew in the ascendant the moment I had passed out of her sight; and when I met William Edgerton the next day, he acquired greatly-increased power over my understanding.

William Edgerton had evidently undergone a change. He no longer met my glances boldly with his own. Perhaps, had he done so, my eyes would have been the first to shrink from the encounter. He looked down, or looked aside, when he spoke to me; his words were few, timorous, hesitating, but studiously conciliatory; and he lingered no longer in my presence than was absolutely unavoidable. Was there not a consciousness in this? and what consciousness? The devil at my heart answered, and answered with truth, "He loves your wife." It would have been well, perhaps, had the cruel fiend said nothing farther. Alas! I would have pardoned, nay, pitied William Edgerton, had the same chuckling spirit not assured me that she also was not insensible to him. I was continually reminded of the words, "Your business must, of course, be attended to!" —"What a considerate wife!" said the tempter; "how very unusual with young wives, with whom business is commonly the very last consideration!"

That very day, I found, on reaching home, that William Edgerton had been there—had gone there almost the moment after he had left me at the office; and that he had remained there, obviously at work in the studio, until the time drew nigh for my return to dinner. My feelings forbade any inquiries. These facts were all related by my wife herself. I did not ask to hear them. I asked for nothing more than she told. The dread that my jealousy should be suspected made me put on a sturdy aspect of indifference; and that exquisite sense of delicacy, which governed every movement of my wife's heart and conduct, forbade her to say—what yet she certainly desired I should know—that, in all that time, she had not seen him, nor he her. She had studiously kept aloof in her chamber so long as he remained. Meanwhile, I brooded over their supposed long and secret interviews. These I took for granted. The happiness they felt—the mutual smile they witnessed—

the unconscious sighs they uttered! Such a picture of their supposed felicity as my morbid imagination conjured up would have roused a doubly damned and damning fiend in the heart of any mortal.

What a task was mine, struggling with these images, these convictions!—my pride struggling to conceal, my feelings struggling to endure. Then, there were other conflicts. What friends had the Edgertons been to me—father, mother—nay, that son himself, once so fondly esteemed, once so fondly esteeming! Of course, no ties such as these could have made me patient under wrong. But they were such as to render it necessary that the wrong should be real, unquestionable, beyond doubt beyond excuse. This I felt, this I resolved.

"I will wait! I will be patient! I will endure, though the vulture gnaws incessant at my heart! I will do nothing precipitate. No, no: I must beware of that! But let me prove them treacherous—let them once falter, and go aside from the straight path, and then—oh, then!"

Such, as in spoken words, was the unspoken resolution of my soul; and this resolution required, first of all, that I should carry out the base purpose which, without a purpose, I had already begun. I must be a spy upon their interviews. They must be followed, watched—eyes, looks, hands! Miserable necessity! but, under my present feelings and determination, not the less a necessity. And I, alone, must do it; I, alone, must peer busily into these mysteries, the revelation of which can result only in my own ruin—seeking still, with an earnest diligence, to discover that which I should rather have prayed for eternal and unmitigated blindness, that I might not see! Mine was, indeed, the philosophy of the madman.

I persevered in it like one. I yielded all opportunities for the meeting of the parties—all opportunities which, in yielding, did not expose me to the suspicion of having any sinister object. If, for example, I found, or could conjecture, that William Edgerton was likely to be at my house this or that evening, I studiously intimated, beforehand, some necessity for being myself absent. This carried me frequently from home—lone, wandering, vexing myself with the most hideous conjectures, the most self-torturing apprehensions. I sped away, obviously,

into the city—to alleged meetings with friends or clients—or on some pretence or other which seemed ordinary and natural. But my course was to return, and, under cover of night, to prowl around my own premises, like some guilty ghost, doomed to haunt the scene of former happiness, in its wantonness rendered a scene of ever-during misery. Certainly, no guilty ghost ever suffered in his penal tortures a torture worse than mine at these humiliating moments. It was torture enough to me that I was sensible of all the unhappy meanness of my conduct. On this head, though I strove to excuse myself on the score of a supposed necessity, I could not deceive myself—no!—not for the smallest moment.

Weeks passed in this manner—weeks to me of misery—of annoyance and secret suffering to my wife. In this time, my espionage resulted in nothing but what has been already shown—in what was already sufficiently obvious to me. William Edgerton continued his insane attentions: he sought my dwelling with studious perseverance—sought it particularly at those periods when he fancied I was absent—when he knew it—though such were not his exclusive periods of visitation. He came at times when I was at home. His passion for my wife was sufficiently evident to me, though her deportment was such as to persuade me that she did not see it. All that I beheld of her conduct was irreproachable. There was a singular and sweet dignity in her air and manner, when they were together, that seemed one of the most insuperable barriers to any rash or presumptuous approach. While there was no constraint about her carriage, there was no familiarity—nothing to encourage or invite familiarity. While she answered freely, responding to all the needs of a suggested subject, she herself never seemed to broach one; and, after hours of nightly watch, which ran through a period of weeks, in which I strove at the shameful occupation of the espial, I was compelled to admit that all her part was as purely unexceptionable as the most jealous husband could have wished it.

But not so with the conduct of William Edgerton. His attentions were increasing. His passion was assuming some of the forms of that delirium to which, under encouragement, it is usually driven in the end. He now passionately watched my wife's

countenance, and no longer averted his glance when it suddenly encountered hers. His eyes, naturally tender in expression, now assumed a look of irrepressible ardency, from which, I now fancied — pleased to fancy — that hers recoiled! He would linger long in silence, silently watching her, and seemingly unconscious, the while, equally of his scrutiny and his silence. At such times, I could perceive that Julia would turn aside, or her own eyes would be marked by an expression of the coldest vacancy, which, but for other circumstances, or in any other condition of my mind, would have seemed to me conclusive of her indignation or dislike. But, when such became my thought, it was soon expelled by some suggestion from the busy devil of my imagination :—

"They may well put on this appearance now; but are such their looks when they meet, sometimes for a whole morning, in the painting-room?" Even here, the fiend was silenced by a fact which was revealed to me in one of my nocturnal watches.

"Clifford not at home?" said Edgerton one evening as he entered, addressing my wife, and looking indifferently around the room. "I wished to tell him about some pictures which are to be seen at ——'s room — really a lovely Guido — an infant Savior — and something, said to be by Carlo Dolce, though I doubt. You must see them. Shall I call for you to-morrow morning?"

"I thank you, but have an engagement for the morning."

"Well, the next day. They will remain but a few days longer in the city."

"I am sorry, but I shall not be able to go even the next day, I am so busy."

"Busy? ah! that reminds me to ask if you have given up the pencil altogether? Have you wholly abandoned the studio? I never see you now at work in the morning. I had no thought that you had so much of the fashionable taste for morning calls, shopping, and the like."

"Nor have I," was the quiet answer. "I seldom leave home in the morning."

"Indeed!" with some doubtfulness of countenance, almost amounting to chagrin — "indeed! how is it that I so seldom see you, then?"

"The cares of a household, I suppose, might be my sufficient excuse. While my liege lord works abroad, I find my duties sufficiently urgent to task all my time at home."

"Really — but you do not propose to abandon the atelier entirely? Clifford himself, with his great fondness for the art, will scarcely be satisfied that you should, even on a pretence of work."

"I do not know. I do not think that *my husband*" — the last two words certainly emphasized — "cares much about it. I suspect that music and painting, however much they delighted and employed our girlhood, form but a very insignificant part of our duties and enjoyments when we get married."

"But you do not mean to say that a fine landscape, or an exquisite head, gives you less satisfaction than before your marriage?"

"I confess they do. Life is a very different thing before and after marriage. It seems far more serious — it appears to me a possession now, and time a sort of property which has to be economized and doled out almost as cautiously as money. I have not touched a brush this fortnight. I doubt if I have been in the painting-room more than once in all this time."

This conversation, which evidently discomfited William Edgerton, was productive to me of no small satisfaction. After a brief interval, consumed in silence, he resumed it:—

"But I must certainly get you to see these pictures. Nay, I must also — since you keep at home — persuade you to look into the studio to-morrow, if it be only to flatter my vanity by looking at a sketch which I have amused myself upon the last three mornings. By-the-way, why may we not look at it to-night?"

"We shall not be able to examine it carefully by night," was the answer, as I fancied, spoken with unwonted coldness and deliberation.

"So much the better for me," he replied, with an ineffectual attempt to laugh; "you will be less able to discern its defects."

"The same difficulty will endanger its beauties," Julia answered, without offering to rise.

"Well, at least, you must arrange for seeing the pictures at [illegible]'s. They are to remain but a few days, and I would not

have you miss seeing them for the world. Suppose you say Saturday morning?"

"If nothing happens to prevent," she said; "and I will endeavor to persuade Mr. Clifford to look at them with us."

"Oh, he is so full of his law and clients, that you will hardly succeed."

This was spoken with evident dissatisfaction. The arrangement, which included me, seemed unnecessary. I need not say that I was better pleased with my wife than I had been for some time previous; but here the juggling fiend interposed again, to suggest the painful suspicion that she knew of my whereabouts, of my jealousy, of my espionage; that her words were rather meant for my ears than for those of Edgerton; or, if this were not the case, her manner to Edgerton was simply adopted, as she had now become conscious of her own feelings —feelings of peril—feelings which would not permit her to trust herself. Ah! she feared herself: she had discovered the passion of William Edgerton, and it had taught her the character and tendency of her own. Was there ever more self-destroying malice than was mine? I settled down upon this last conviction. My wife's coldness was only assumed to prevent Edgerton from seeing her weakness; and, for Edgerton himself, I now trembled with the conviction that I should have to shed his blood.

CHAPTER XXIV

A GROUP.

THIS conviction now began to haunt my mind with all the punctuality of a shadow. It came to me unconsciously, uncalled for; mingled with other thoughts and disturbed them all. Whether at my desk, or in the courts; among men in the crowded mart, or in places simply where the idle and the thoughtless congregate, it was still my companion. It was, however, still a shadow only; a dull, intangible, half-formed image of the mind; the crude creature of a fear rather than a desire; for, of a truth, nothing could be more really terrible to me than the apparent necessity of taking the life of one so dear to me once, and still so dear to the only friends I had ever known. I need not say how silently I strove to banish this conviction. My struggles on this subject were precisely those which are felt by nervous men suddenly approaching a precipice, and, though secure, flinging themselves off, in the extremity of their apprehensions of that danger which has assumed in their imaginations an aspect so absorbing. With such persons, the extreme anxiety to avoid the deed, whether of evil or of mere danger, frequently provokes its commission. I felt that this risk encountered me. I well knew that an act often contemplated may be already considered half-performed; and though I could not rid myself of the impression that I was destined to do the deed the very idea of which made me shudder, I yet determined, with all the remaining resolution of my virtue, to dismiss it from my thought, as I resolved to escape from its performance if I could.

It would have been easy enough for me to have kept this resolution as it was enough for me to make it, had it not clashed with a superior passion in my mind; but that blindness of heart under which I labored, impaired my judgment, enfeebled my

resolution, baffled my prudence, defeated all my faculties of self-preservation. I was, in fact, a monomaniac. On one subject, I was incapable of thought, of sane reasoning, of fixed purpose. I am unwilling to distinguish this madness by the word "jealousy." In the ordinary sense of the term it was not jealousy. Phrenologists would call it an undue development of self-esteem, diseased by frequent provocation into an irritable suspiciousness, which influenced all the offices of thought. It was certain, to myself, that in instituting the watch which I did over the conduct of my wife and William Edgerton, I did not expect to discover the commission of any gross act which, in the vulgar acceptation of the world, constitutes the crime of infidelity. The pang would not have been less to my mind, though every such act was forborne, if I perceived that her eyes yearned for his coming, and her looks of despondency took note of his absence. If I could see that she hearkened to his words with the ears of one who deferred even to devotedness, and found that pleasure in his accents which should only have been accorded to mine. It is the low nature, alone, which seeks for developments beyond these, to constitute the sin of faithlessness. Of looks, words, consideration, habitual deference, and eager attention, I was quite as uxorious as I should have been of the warm kiss, or the yielding, fond embrace. They were the same in my eyes. It was for the momentary glance, the passing word, the forgetful sigh, that I looked and listened, while I pursued the unhappy espionage upon my wife and her lover. That he was her lover, was sufficiently evident—how far she was pleased with his devotion was the question to be asked and—answered!

The self-esteem which produced these developments of jealousy, in my own home, was not unexercised abroad. The same exacting nature was busy among my friends and mere acquaintance. Of these I had but few; to these I could be devoted; for these I could toil; for these I could freely have perished! But I demanded nothing less from them. Of their consideration and regard I was equally uxorious as I was of the affections of my wife. I was an *intensifier* in all my relations, and was not willing to divide or share my sympathies. I became suspicious when I found any of my acquaintance forming new intimacies, and sunk into reserves which necessarily produced a severance

of the old ties between us. It naturally followed that my few friends became fewer, and I finally stood alone. But enough of self-analysis, which, in truth, owes its origin to the very same mental quality which I have been discussing — the presence and prevalence of *egoïsme*. Let us hurry our progress.

My wife advised me of the visit which William Edgerton had proposed to the picture collection.

"I will go," she said, "if you will."

"You must go without me."

"Ah, why? Surely, you can go one morning?"

"Impossible. The morning is the time for business. *That* must be attended to, you know."

"But you needn't slave yourself at it because it is business, Edward. But that I know that you are not a money-loving man, I should suppose, sometimes, from the continual plea of business, that you were a miser, and delighted in filling old stockings to hide away in holes and chinks of the wall. Come, now, Saturday is not usually a busy day with you lawyers; steal it this once and go with us. I lose half the pleasure of the sight always, when you are not with me, and when I know that you are engaged in working for me elsewhere."

"Ah, you mistake, Julia. You shall not flatter me into such a faith. You lose precious little by my absence."

"But, Edward, I do; believe me — it is true."

"Impossible! No, no, Julia, when you look on the Carlo Dolce and the Guido, you will forget not only the toils of the husband, but that you have one at all. You will forget my harsh features in the contemplation of softer ones."

"Your features are not harsh ones, Edward."

"Nay, you shall not persuade me that I am not an Orson — a very wild man of the woods. I know I am. I know that I have harsh features; nay, I fancy you know it too, by this time, Julia."

"I admit the sternness at times, Edward, but I deny the harshness. Besides, sternness, you know, is perfectly compatible with the possession of the highest human beauty. I am not sure that a certain portion of sternness is not absolutely necessary to manly beauty. It seems to me that I have never yet

seen what I call a handsome man, whose features had not a certain sweet gravity, a sort of melancholy defiance, in them which neutralized the effect of any effeminacy which mere beauty must have had; and imparted to them a degree of character which compelled you to turn again and look, and made you remember them, even when they had disappeared from sight. Now, it may be the vanity of a wife, Edward, but it seems to me that this is the very sort of face which you possess."

"Ah! you are very vain of me, I know—very!"

"Proud, fond—not vain!"

"You deceive yourself still, I suspect, even with your distinctions. But you must forego the pleasure of displaying my 'stern beauties,' as your particular possession, at the gallery. You must content yourself with others not so stern, though perhaps not less beautiful, and certainly more amiable. Edgerton will be your sufficient chaperon."

"Yes, but I do not wish to be troubling Mr. Edgerton so frequently; and, indeed, I would rather forego the pleasure of seeing the pictures altogether, than trespass in this way upon his attention and leisure."

"Indeed, but I am very sure you do not trespass upon either. He is an idle, good fellow, relishes anything better than business, and you know has such a passion for painting and pictures that its indulgence seems to justify anything to his mind. He will forget everything in their pursuit."

All this was said with a studious indifference of manner. I was singularly successful in concealing the expression of that agony which was gnawing all the while upon my heart. I could smile, too, while I was speaking—while I was suffering! Look calmly into her face and smile, with a composure, a strength, the very consciousness of which was a source of terrible overthrow to me at last. I was surprised to perceive an air of chagrin upon Julia's countenance, which was certainly unstudied. She was one of those who do not well conceal or cloak their real sentiments. The faculty of doing so is usually much more strongly possessed by women than by men—much more easily commanded—but *she* had little of it. Why should she wear this expression of disappointment—chagrin! Was she really anxious that I should attend her? I began to think so—began

to relent, and think of promising that I would go with her, when she somewhat abruptly laid her hand upon my arm.

"Edward, you leave me too frequently. You stay from me too long, particularly at evening. Do not forget, dear husband, how few female friends I have; how few friends of any sort—how small is my social circle. Besides, it is expected of all young people, newly married, that they will be frequently together; and when it is seen that they are often separate—that the wife goes abroad alone, or goes in the company of persons not of the family, it begets a suspicion that all is not well—that there is no peace, no love, in the family so divided. Do not think, Edward, that I mean this reproachfully—that I mean complaint—that I apprehend the loss of your love: oh no! I dread too greatly any such loss to venture upon its suspicion lightly, but I would guard against the conjectures of others——"

"So, then, it is not that you really wish my company. It is because you would simply maintain appearances."

"I would do both, Edward. God knows I care as little for mere appearances, so long as the substances are good, as you do; but I confess I would not have the neighbors speak of me as the neglected wife; I would not have you the subject of vulgar reproach."

"To what does all this tend?" I demanded impatiently.

"To nothing, Edward, if by speaking it I make you angry."

"Do not speak it, then!" was my stern reply.

"I will not; do not turn away—do not be angry:" here she sobbed once, convulsively; but with an effort of which I had not thought her capable, she stifled the painful utterance, and continued grasping my wrist as she spoke with both her hands, and speaking in a whisper—

"You are not going to leave me in anger. Oh, no! Do not! Kiss me, dear husband, and forgive me. If I have vexed you, it was only because I was so selfishly anxious to keep you more with me—to be more certain that you are all my own!"

I escaped from this scene with some difficulty. I should be doing my own heart, blind and wilful as it was, a very gross injustice, if I did not confess that the sincere and natural deportment of Julia had rendered me largely doubtful of the good sense or the good feeling of the course I was pursuing. But the

effects of it were temporary only. The very feeling, thus forced upon me, that I was, and had been, doing wrong, was a humiliating one; and calculated rather to sustain my self-esteem, even though it lessened the amount of justification which my jealousy may have supposed itself possessed of. The disease had been growing too long within my bosom. It had taken too deep root—had spread its fibres into a region too rank and stimulating not to baffle any ordinary diligence on the part of the extirpator, even if he had been industrious and sincere. It had been growing with my growth, had shared my strength from the beginning, was a part of my very existence! Still, though not with that hearty fondness which her feeling demanded, I returned her caresses, folded her to my bosom, kissed the tears from her cheek, and half promised myself, though I said nothing of this to her, that I would attend her to the picture exhibition.

But I did not. Half an hour before the appointed time I resolved to do so; but the evil spirit grew uppermost in that brief interval, and suggested to me a course more in unison with its previous counsellings. Under this mean prompting I prepared to go to the gallery, but not till my wife had already gone there under Edgerton's escort. The object of this afterthought was to surprise them there—to enter at the unguarded moment, and read the language of their mutual eyes, when they least apprehended such scrutiny.

Pitiful as was this design, I yet pursued it. I entered the picture room at a moment which was sufficiently auspicious for my objects. They were the only occupants of the apartment. I learned this fact before I ascended the stairs from the keeper of the gallery, who sat in a lower room. The stairs were carpeted. I wore light thin pumps, which were noiseless. I may add, as a singular moral contradiction, that I not only did not move stealthily, but that I set down my feet with greater emphasis than was usual with me, as if I sought, in this way to lessen somewhat the meanness of my proceeding. My approach, however, was entirely unheard; and I stood for a few seconds in the doorway, gazing upon the parties without making them conscious of my intrusion.

Julia was sitting, gazing, with hand lifted above her eyes, at a Murillo—a ragged Spanish boy, true equally to the life and

to the peculiar characteristics of that artist — dark groundwork, keen, arch expression, great vivacity, with an air of pregnant humor which speaks of more than is shown, and makes you fancy that other pictures are to follow in which the same boy must appear in different phases of feeeling and of fortune.

I need not say that the pictures, however, called for a momentary glance only from me. My glances were following my thoughts, and they were piercing through the only possible avenues, the cheeks, the lips, the tell-tale eyes, deep down into the very hearts of the suspected parties. They were so placed that, standing at the door, and half hidden from sight by a screen, I could see with tolerable distinctness the true expsion in each countenance, though I saw but half the face. Julia was gazing upon the pictures, but Edgerton was gazing upon her! He had no eyes for any other object; and I fancied, from the abstracted and almost vacant expression of his looks, that I without startling him from his dream. In his features, speaking, even in their obliviousness of all without, was one sole, absorbing sentiment of devotion. His eyes were riveted with a strenuous sort of gaze upon her, and her only. He stood partly on one side, but still behind her, so that, without changing her position, she could scarcely have beheld his countenance. I looked in vain, in the brief space of time which I employed in surveying them, but she never once turned her head; nor did he once withdraw his glance from her neck and cheek, a part only of which could have been visible to him where he stood. Her features, meanwhile, were subdued and placid. There was nothing which could make me dissatisfied with her, had I not been predisposed to this dissatisfaction; and when the tones of my voice were heard, she started up to meet me with a sudden flash of pleasure in her eyes which illuminated her whole countenance.

"Ah! you are come, then. I am so glad!"

She little knew why I had come. I blushed involuntarily with the conviction of the base motive which had brought me. he immediately grasped my arm, drew me to the contemplation of those pictures which had more particularly pleased her.

self, absolutely seeming to forget that there was a third person in the room. William Edgerton turned away and busied himself, for the first time no doubt, in the examination of a landscape on the opposite wall. I followed his movement with my glance for a single instant, but his face was studiously averted.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE OLD GOOSE FINDS A YOUNG GANDER.

We will suppose some months to have elapsed in this manner—months, to me, of prolonged torture and suspicion. Circumstances, like petty billows of the sea, kept chafing upon the low places of my heart, keeping alive the feverish irritation which had already done so much toward destroying my peace, and overthrowing the guardian outposts of my pride and honor. How long the strife was to be continued before the ocean-torrents should be let in—before the wild passions should quite overwhelm my reason—was a subject of doubt, but not the less a subject of present and of exceeding fear. In these matters, I need not say that there was substantially very little change in the character of events that marked the progress of my domestic life. William Edgerton still continued the course which he had so unwittingly begun. He still sought every opportunity to see my wife, and, if possible, to see her alone. He avoided me as much as possible; seldom came to the office; absolutely gave up his business altogether; and, when we met, though his words and manner were solicitously kind, there was a close restraint upon the latter, a hesitancy about the former, a timid apprehensiveness in his eye, and a generally-shown reluctance to approach me, which I could not but see, and could not but perceive, at the same time, that he endeavored with ineffectual effort to conceal. He was evidently conscious that he was doing wrong. It was equally clear to me that he lacked the manly courage to do right. What was all this to end in? The question became momently more and more serious. Suppose that he possessed no sort of influence over my wife? Even suppose his advances to stop where they were at present—his course already, so far, was a humiliating indignity, allowing

that it became perceptible to the eyes of others. That revelation once made, there could be no more proper forbearance on the part of the husband. The customs of our society, the tone of public opinion—nay, outraged humanity itself—demanded then the interposition of the avenger. And that revelation was at hand.

Meanwhile, the keenest eyes of suspicion could behold nothing in the conduct of Julia which was not entirely unexceptionable. If William Edgerton was still persevering in his pursuit, Julia seemed insensible to his endeavors. Of course, they met frequently when it was not in my power to see them. It was my error to suppose that they met more frequently still—that he saw her invariably in his morning visits to the studio, which was not often the case—and, when they did meet, that she derived quite as much satisfaction from the interview as himself. Of their meetings, except at night, when I was engaged in my miserable watch upon them, I could say nothing. Failing to note anything evil at such periods, my jealous imagination jumped to the conclusion that this was because my espionage was suspected, and that their interviews at other periods were distinguished by less prudence and reserve. And yet, could I have reasoned rightly at this period, I must have seen that, if such were the case, there would have been no such display of *empressement* as William Edgerton made at these evening visits. Did he expend his ardor in the day, did he apprehend my scrutiny at night, he would surely have suppressed the eagerness of his glance—the profound, all-forgetting adoration which marked his whole air, gaze, and manner. Nor should I have been so wretchedly blind to what was the obvious feeling of discontent and disquiet in her bosom. Never did evenings seem to pass with more downright dullness to any one party in the world. If Edgerton spoke to her, which he did not frequently, his address was marked by a trepidation and hesitancy akin to fear—a manner which certainly indicated anything but a foregone conclusion between them; while her answers, on the other hand, were singularly cold, merely replying, and calculated invariably to discourage everything like a protracted conversation. What was said by Edgerton was sufficiently harmless—nor harmless merely. It was most commonly mere

ordinary commonplace, the feeble effort of one who feels the necessity of speech, yet dares not speak the voluminous passions which alone could furnish him with energetic and manly utterance. Had the scales not been abundantly thick and callous above my eyes, how easily might these clandestine scrutinies have brought me back equally to happiness and my senses! But though I thus beheld the parties, and saw the truth as I now relate it, there was always then some little trifling circumstance that would rise up, congenial to suspicion, and cloud my conclusions, and throw me back upon old doubts and cruel jealousies. Edgerton's tone may, at moments, have been more faltering and more tender than usual; Julia's glance might sometimes encounter his, and then they both might seem to fall, in mutual confusion, to the ground. Perhaps she sung some little ditty at his instance—some ditty that she had often sung for me. Nay, at his departure, she might have attended him to the entrance, and he may have taken her hand and retained his grasp upon it rather longer than was absolutely necessary for his farewell. How was I to know the degree of pressure which he gave to the hand within his own? That single grasp, not unfrequently, undid all the better impressions of a whole evening consumed in these unworthy scrutinies. I will not seek further to account for or to defend this unhappy weakness. Has not the great poet of humanity said—

> "Trifles, light as air,
> Are, to the jealous, confirmations strong
> As proofs of Holy Writ"?

Medical men tell us of a predisposing condition of the system for the inception of epidemic. It needs, after this, but the smallest atmospheric changes, and the contagion spreads, and blackens, and taints the entire body of society, even unto death. The history of the moral constitution is not unanalogous to this. The disease, the damning doubt, once in the mind, and the rest is easy. It may sleep and be silent for a season, for years, unprovoked by stimulating circumstances; but let the moral atmosphere once receive its color from the suddenly-passing cloud, and the dark spot dilates within the heart, grows active, and rapidly sends its poisonous and poisoning tendrils through all

the avenues of mind. Its bitter secretions in my soul affected all the objects of my sight, even as the jaundiced man lives only in a saffron element. Perhaps no course of conduct on the part of my wife could have seemed to me entirely innocent. Certainly none could have been entirely satisfactory, or have seemed entirely proper. Even her words, when she spoke to me alone, were of a kind to feed my prevailing passion. Yet, regarded under just moods, they should have been the most conclusive, not simply of her innocence, but of the devotedness of her heart to the requisitions of her duty. Her love and her sense of right seemed harmoniously to keep together. Gentlest reproaches chided me for leaving her, when she sought for none but myself. Sweetest endearments encountered my return, and fondest entreaties would have delayed the hour of my departure. Her earnestness, when she implored me not to leave her so frequently at night, almost reached intensity, and had a meaning, equally expressive of her delicacy and apprehensions, which I was unhappily too slow to understand.

Six months had probably elapsed from the time of Mr. Clifford's death, when, returning from my office one day, who should I encounter in my wife's company but her mother? Of this good lady I had been permitted to see but precious little since my marriage. Not that she had kept aloof from our dwelling entirely. Julia had always conceived it a duty to seek her mother at frequent periods without regarding the ill treament which she received; and the latter, becoming gradually reconciled to what she could no longer prevent, had at length so far put on the garments of Christian charity as to make a visit to her daughter in return. Of course, though I did not encourage it, I objected nothing to this renewed intercourse; which continued to increase until, as in the present instance, I sometimes encountered this good lady on my return from my office. On these occasions I treated her with becoming respect, though without familiarity. I inquired after her health, expressed myself pleased to see her, and joined my wife in requesting her to stay to dinner. Until now, she usually declined to do so; and her manner to myself hitherto was that of a spoiled child indulging in his sulks. But, this day, to my great consternation, she was all smiles and

A change so sudden portended danger. I looked to my wife, whose grave countenance afforded me no explanation. I looked to the lady herself, my own countenance no doubt sufficiently expressive of the wonder which I felt, but there was little to be read in that quarter which could give me any clue to the mystery. Yet she chattered like a magpie; her conversation running on certain styles of dress, various purchases of silks, and satins, and other stuffs, which she had been buying—a budget of which, I afterward discovered, she had brought with her, in order to display to her daughter. Then she spoke of her teeth, newly filed and plugged, and grinned with frequent effort, that their improved condition might be made apparent. Her chatter was peculiarly that of a flippant and conceited girl-child of sixteen, whose head has been turned by premature bringing out, and the tuition of some vain, silly, wriggling mother. I could see, by my wife's looks, that there was a cause for all this, and waited, with considerable apprehension, for the moment when we should be alone, in order to receive from her an explanation. But little of Mrs. Clifford's conversation was addressed to me, though that little was evidently meant to be particularly civil. But, a little before she took her departure, which was soon after dinner, she asked me with some abruptness, though with a considerable smirk of meaning in her face, if I "knew a Mr. Patrick Delaney." I frankly admitted that I had not this pleasure; and with a still more significant smirk, ending in a very affected simper, meant to be very pleasant, she informed me, as she took her leave, that Julia would make me wiser. I looked to Julia when she was gone, and, with some chagrin, and with few words, she unravelled the difficulty. Her mother—the old fool—was about to be married, and to a Mr. Patrick Delaney, an Irish gentleman, fresh from the green island, who had only been some eighteen months in America.

"You seem annoyed by this affair, Julia; but how does it affect you?"

"Oh, such a match can not turn out well. This Mr. Delaney is a young man, only twenty-five, and what can he see in mother to induce him to marry her? It can only be for the little pittance of property which she possesses."

I shrugged my shoulders while replying:—

"There must be some consideration in every marriage-contract."

"Ah! but, Edward, what sort of a man can it be to whom money is the consideration for marrying a woman old enough to be his mother?"

"And so little money, too. But, Julia, perhaps he marries her as a mother. He is a modest youth, who knows his juvenility, and seeks becoming guardianship. But the thing does not concern us at all."

"She is my mother, Edward."

"True; but still I do not see that the matter should concern us. You do not apprehend that Mr. Patrick Delaney will seek to exercise the authority of a father over either of us?"

"No! but I fear she will repent."

"Why should that be a subject of fear which should be a subject of gratulation? For my part, I hope she may repent. We are told she can not be saved else."

Julia was silent. I continued:—

"But what brings her here, and makes her so suddenly affable with me? That is certainly a matter which looks threatening. Does she explain this to you, Julia?"

"Not otherwise than by declaring she is sorry for former differences."

"Ah, indeed! but her sorrow comes too late, and I very much suspect has some motive. What more? the shaft is not yet shot."

"You guess rightly; she invites us to the wedding, and insists that we must come, as a proof that we harbor no malice."

"Is that all?"

"All, I believe."

"She is more considerate than I expected. Well, you promised her?"

"No; I told her I could say nothing without consulting you."

"And would you wish to go, Julia?"

"Oh, surely, dear husband."

"We will both go, then."

A week afterward the affair took place, and we were among the spectators.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE HEART-FIEND FINDS AN ECHO FROM THE FIEND WITHOUT.

AND a spectacle it was! Mrs. Clifford, about to become Mrs. Delaney, was determined that the change in her situation should be distinguished by becoming eclât. Always a silly woman, fond of extravagance and show, she prepared to celebrate an occasion of the greatest folly in a style of greater extravagance than ever. She accordingly collected as many of her former numerous acquaintances as were still willing to appear within a circle in which wealth was no longer to be found. Her house was small, but, as has been elsewhere stated in this narrative, she had made it smaller by stuffing it with the massive and costly furniture which had been less out of place in her former splendid mansion, and had there much better accorded with her fortunes. She now still further stuffed it with her guests. Of course, many of those present, came only to make merry at her expense. Her husband was almost entirely unknown to any of them; and it was enough to settle his pretensions in every mind, that, in the vigor of his youth, a really fine-looking, well-made person of twenty-five, he was about to connect himself, in marriage, with a haggard old woman of fifty, whose personal charms, never very great, were nearly all gone; and whose mind and manners, the grace of youth being no more, were so very deficient in all those qualities which might commend one to a husband. So far as externals went, Mr. Delaney was a very proper man. He behaved with sufficient decorum, and unexpected modesty; and went through the ordeal as composedly as if the occurrence had been frequently before familiar; as indeed we shall discover in the sequel, was certainly the case But this does not concern us here.

Three rooms were thrown open to the company. We had refreshments in abundance and great variety, and at a certain hour, we were astounded by the clamor of tamborine and fiddle giving due notice to the dancers. Among my few social accomplishments, this of dancing had never been included. Naturally, I should, perhaps, be considered an awkward man. I was conscious of this awkwardness at all times when not excited by action or some earnest motive. I was incapable of that graceful loitering, that flexibleness of mind and body, which excludes the idea of intensity, of every sort, and which constitutes one of the great essentials for success in a ball-room. It was in this very respect that my *friend*, William Edgerton, may be said to have excelled most young men of our acquaintance. He was what, in common speech, is called an accomplished man. Of very graceful person, without much earnestness of character, he had acquired a certain fastidiousness of taste on the subjects of costume and manners, which, without Brummellizing, he yet carried to an extent which betrayed a considerable degree of mental feebleness. This somewhat assimilated him to the fashionable dandy. He walked with an air equally graceful, noble, and unaffected. He was never on stilts, yet he was always *en règle*. He had as little *mauvais honte* as *mauvais ton*. In short, whatever might have been his deficiencies, he was confessedly a very neat specimen of the fine gentleman in its most commendable social sense.

William Edgerton was among the guests of Mrs. Clifford. There had been no previous intimacy between the Edgerton and Clifford families, yet he had been specially invited. Mrs. C. could have had but a single motive for inviting him—so I thought—that of making her evening a jam. She had just that ambition of the lady of small fashion, who regards the number rather than the quality of her guests, and would prefer a saloon full of Esquimaux or Kanzas, and would partake of their sea-blubber, rather than lose the triumph of making more noise than her rival neighbors, the Sprigginses or Wigginses.

William Edgerton did not seek me; but, when I left the side of my wife to pay my respects to some ladies at the opposite end of the room, he approached her. A keen pang that rendered me unconscious of everything I was saying—nay, even

of the persons to whom I was addressing myself—shot through my heart, as I beheld him crossing the floor to the place that I had left. Involuntarily, the gracefulness of his person and carriage provoked in my mind a contrast most unfavorable to me, between him and myself. It was no satisfaction to me at that time to reflect that I was less graceful only because I was more earnest, more sincere. This is usually the case, and is reasonably accounted for. Intensity and great earnestness of character, are wholly inconsistent with a nice attention to forms, carriage, demeanor. But what does a lady care for such distinction? Does she even suspect it? Not often. If she could only fancy for a moment that the well-made but awkward man who traverses the room before her, carried in his breast a soul of such ardency and volume that it subjected his very motion arbitrarily to its own excitements, its own convulsions; that the very awkwardness which offended her was the result of the most deep and passionate feelings—feelings which, like the buried flame in the mountain, are continually boiling up for utterance—convulsing the prison-house which retained them—shaking the solid earth with their pent throes, that will not always be pent! Ah! these things do not move ladies' fancies. There are very few endowed with that thoughtful pride which disdains surfaces. Julia Clifford was one of these few! But I little knew it then.

The approach of William Edgerton to my wife was a signal for my torture all that evening. From that moment my mind was wandering. I knew little what I said, or looked, or did. My chat with those around me became, on a sudden, bald and disjointed; and when I beheld the pair, both nobly formed—he tall, graceful, manly—she, beautiful and bending as a lily—a purity beaming, amid all their brightness, from her eyes—a purity which, I had taught myself to believe, was no longer in her heart—when I beheld them advance into the floor, conspicuous over all the rest, in most eyes, as they certainly were in mine—I can not describe—you may conjecture—the cold, fainting sickness which overcame my soul. I could have lain myself down upon the lone, midnight rocks, and surrendered myself to solitude and storm for ever.

They entered the stately measures of the Spanish dance

But the grace of movement which won the murmuring applause of all around me, only increased the agony of my afflictions. I saw their linked arms—the compliant, willing movements of their mutual forms—and dark were the images of guilt and hateful suspicion which entered my brain and grew to vivid forms, in action before me. I fancied the fierce, passionate yearnings in the heart of Edgerton; I trembled when I conjectured what fancies filled the heart of Julia. I can not linger over the torturing influence of those moments—moments which seemed ages! Enough that I was maddened with the delirium, now almost as its height, which had been for months preying upon my brain like some corroding serpent.

The dance closed. Edgerton conducted her to a seat and placed himself beside her. I kept aloof. I watched them from a distance; and in sustaining this watch, I was compelled to recall my senses with a stern degree of resolution which should save my feelings from the detection of those inquisitive glances which I fancied were all around me. If I was weakest among men, in the disease which destroyed my peace, Heaven knows I was among the strongest of men in concealing its expression at the very moment when every pulsation of my heart was an especial agony. I affected indifference, threw myself into the midst of a group of such people as talk of their neighbor's bonnets or breeches, the rise of stocks, or the fall of rain; and how Mrs. Jenkins has set up her carriage, and Mr. Higgins has been compelled to set down, and to sell out his. Interesting details, perhaps, without which the nine in ten might as well be tongueless or tongue-tied for ever. This stuff I had to hear, and requite in like currency, while my brain was boiling, and dim, but terrible images of strife, and storm, and agony, were rushing through it with howling and hisses. There I sat, thus seemingly engaged, but with an eye ever glancing covertly to the two, who, at that moment, absorbed every thought of my mind, every feeling of my heart, and filled them both with the bitterest commotion. The glances of their mutual eyes, the expression of lip and cheek, I watched with the keenest analysis of suspicion. In Julia, I saw sweetness mixed with a delicate reserve. She seemed to speak but little. Her eyes wandered from her companion—frequently to where I sat—

but I gave myself due credit, at such moments, for the ability with which I conducted my own espionage. My inference—equally unjust and unnatural—that her timid glances to myself denoted in her bosom a consciousness of wrong—seemed to me the most natural and inevitable inference. And when I noted the ardency of Edgerton's gaze, his close, unrelaxing attentions, the seeming forgetfulness of all around which he manifested, I hurried to the conclusion that his words were of a character to suit his looks, and betray in more emphatic utterance, the passion which they also betrayed.

The signal, after a short respite, devoted to fruits, ices, &c., was made for the dancers, and William Edgerton rose. I noted his bow to my wife, saw that he spoke, and necessarily concluded, that he again solicited her to dance. Her lips moved—she bowed slightly—and he again took his seat beside her. I inferred from this that she declined to dance a second time. She was certainly more prudent than himself. I assigned to prudence—to policy—on her part, what might well have been placed to a nobler motive. I went further.

"She will not dance with him," said the busy fiend at my shoulder, "for the very reason that she prefers a quiet seat beside him. In the dance they mingle with others; they can not speak with so much ease and safety. Now she has him all to herself."

I dashed away, forgetful, gloomily, from the knot by which I had been encompassed. I passed into the adjoining room, which was connected by folding doors, with that I left. The crowd necessarily grouped itself around the dancers, and gaining a window-jamb, I stood absolutely forgetting where I was alone among the many—with my eye stretching over the heads of the flying masses, to the remote spot where my wife still sat with Edgerton. I was aroused from my hateful dream by a slight touch upon my arm. I started with a painful sense of my own weakness—with a natural dread that the secret misery under which I labored was no longer a secret. I writhed under the conviction that the cold, the sneering, and the worthless, were making merry with my afflictions. I met the gaze of the bride—the mistress of ceremonies—my wife's mother Mrs. Delaney, late Clifford. I shuddered as I beheld her

glance. I could not mistake the volume of meaning in her smile — that wretched smile of her thin, withered lips, brimful of malignant cunning, which said emphatically as such smile could say :—

"I see you on the rack; I know that you are writhing; and I enjoy your tortures."

I started, as if to leave her, with a look of fell defiance, roused, ready to burst forth into utterance, upon my own face. But she gently detained my arm.

"You are troubled."

"No."

"Ah! but you are. Stop awhile. You will feel better."

"Thank you; but I feel very well."

"No, no, you do not. You can not deceive me. I know where the shoe pinches; but what did you expect? Were you simple enough to imagine that a woman would be true to her husband, who was false to her own mother?"

"Fiend!" I muttered in her ear.

"Ha! ha! ha!" was the unmeasured response of the beldame, loud enough for the whole house to hear. I darted from her grasp, which would have detained me still, made my way — how I know not — out of the house, and found myself almost gasping for breath, in the open air of the street.

She, at least, had been sagacious enough to find out my secret!

CHAPTER XXVII.

KINGSLEY.

THE fiendish suggestion of the mother, against the purity of her own child, almost divested me, for the moment, of my own rancor—almost deprived me of my suspicions! Could anything have been more thoroughly horrible and atrocious! It certainly betrayed how deep was the malignant hatred which she had ever borne to myself, and of which her daughter was now required to bear a portion. What a volume of human depravity was opened on my sight, by that single utterance of this wretched mother. Guilt and sin! ye are, indeed, the masters everywhere! How universal is your dominion! How ye rage—how ye riot among souls, and minds, and fancies—never utterly overthrown anywhere—busy always—everywhere—sovereign in how many hapless regions of the heart! Who is pure among men? Who can be sure of himself for a day—an hour? Precious few! None, certainly, who do not distrust their own strength with a humility only to be won from prayer—prayer coupled with moderate desires, and the presence of a constant thought, which teaches that time is a mere agent of eternity, and he who works for the one only, will not even be secure of peace during the period for which he works. Truly, he who lives not for the future is the very last who may reasonably hope to enjoy the blessings of the present.

But this was not the season, nor was mine the mood, for moral reflections of any sort. My secret was known! That was everything. When the conduct of William Edgerton had become such, as to awaken the notice of third persons, I was

justified in exacting from him the heavy responsibility he had incurred. The vague, indistinct conviction had long floated before my mind, that I would be required to take his life. The period which was to render this task necessary, was that which had now arrived—when it had been seen by others—not interested like myself—that he had passed the bounds of propriety. Of course, I was arguing in a circle, from which I should have found it impossible to extricate myself. Thousands might have seen that I was jealous, without being able to see any just cause for my jealousy. It was, however, quite enough for a proud spirit like my own, that its secret fear should be revealed. It did not much matter, after this, whether my suspicions were, or were not causeless. It was enough that they were known—that busy, meddling women, and men about town, should distinguish me with a finger—should say: "His wife is very pretty and—very charitable!"

"Ha! ha! ha!"

I, too, could laugh, under such musings, and in the spirit of Mrs. Delaney—late Clifford.

"Ha! ha! ha!" The street echoed, beneath the windows of that reputable lady, with my involuntary, fiendish laughter. I stood there—and the music rang through my senses like the cries of exulting demons. She was there—of my wife the thoughts ran thus, she was there, whirling, perchance, in the mazes of that voluptuous dance, then recently become fashionable among us; his arm about her waist—her form inclining to his, as if seeking support and succor—and both of them forgetting all things but the mutual intoxication which swallowed up all things and thoughts in the absorbing sensuality of one! Or, perhaps, still apart, they sat to themselves—her ear fastened upon his lips—her consciousness given wholly to his discourse; and that discourse!—"Ha! ha! ha!"—I laughed again, as I hurried away from the spot, with gigantic strides, taking the direction which led to my own lonely dwelling.

All was stillness there, but there was no peace. I entered the piazza, threw myself into a chair, and gazed out upon the leaves and waters, trying to collect my scattered thoughts—trying to subdue my blood, that my thoughts might meet in deliberation upon the desolating prospect which was then spread before

me. But I struggled for this in vain. But one thought was mine at that hour. But one fearful image gathered in completeness and strength before my mind; and that was one calculated to banish all others and baffle all their deliberations.

"The blood of William Edgerton must be shed, and by these hands! My disgrace is known! There is no help for it!"

I had repeatedly resolved this gloomy conviction in my mind. It was now to receive shape and substance. It was a thing no longer to be thought upon. It was a thing to be done! This necessity staggered me. The kindness of the father, the kindness and long true friendship of the son himself, how could I requite this after such a fashion? How penetrate the peaceful home of that fond family with an arm of such violence, as to rend their proudest offspring from the parental tree, and, perhaps, in destroying it, blight for ever the venerable trunk upon which it was borne? Let it not be fancied that these feelings were without effect. Let it not be supposed that I weakly, willingly, yielded to the conviction of this cruel necessity — that I determined, without a struggle, upon this seemingly necessary measure! Verily, I then, in that dreary house and hour, wrestled like a strong man with the unbidden prompter, who counselled me to the deed of blood. I wrestled with him as the desperate man, knowing the supernatural strength of his enemy, wrestles with a demon. The strife was a fearful one. I could not suppress my groans of agony; and the cold sweat gathered and stood upon my forehead in thick, clammy drops.

But the struggle was vain to effect my resolution. It had been too long present as a distinct image before my imagination. I had already become too familiar with its aspects. It had the look of a fate to my mind. I fancied myself — as probably most men will do, whose self-esteem is very active — the victim of a fate. My whole life tended to confirm this notion. I was chosen out from the beginning for a certain work, in which, myself a victim, I was to carry out the designs of destiny in the case of other victims. I had struggled long not to believe this — not to do this work. But the struggle was at last at an end. I was convinced, finally. I was ready for the work. I was resigned to my fate. But oh! how grateful once had one of these

victims seemed in my eyes! How beautiful, and still how dear was the other!

I rose from my seat and struggle, with the air of one strengthened by thoughtful resolution for any act. Prayer could not have strengthened me more. I felt a singular degree of strength. I can well understand that of fanaticism from my own feelings. Nothing, in the shape of danger, could have deterred me from the deed. I positively had no remaining fear. But, how was it to be done? With this inquiry in my mind, still unanswered, I took a light, went into my study, and drew from my escritoir the few small weapons which I had in possession. These are soon named. One was a neat little dirk—broad in blade, double-edged, short—sufficient for all my purposes. I examined my pistols and loaded them—a small, neat pair, the present of Edgerton himself. This fact determined me not to use them. I restored them to the escritoir; put the dagger between the folds of my vest, and prepared to leave the house.

At this moment a heavy knocking was heard at the gate I resumed my seat in the piazza until the servant should report the nature of the interruption. He was followed in by my friend Kingsley.

"I am glad to find you home," said he abruptly, grasping my hand; "home, and not a-bed. The hour is late, I know, but the devil never keeps ordinary hours, and men, driven by his satanic majesty, have some excuse for following his example."

This exordium promised something unusual. The manner of Kingsley betrayed excitement. Nay, it was soon evident he had been taking a superfluous quantity of wine. His voice was thick, and he spoke excessively loud in order to be intelligible. There was something like a defying desperation in his tones, in the dare-devil swagger of his movement, and the almost iron pressure of his grasp upon my fingers. I subdued my own passions—nay, they were subdued—singularly so, by the resolution I had made before his entrance, and was able, therefore, to appear calm and smooth as summer water in his eyes.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "You seem excited. No evil, I trust?"

"Evil, indeed! Not much; but even if it were, I tell you

Ned Clifford, I am just now in the mood to say, 'Evil be thou my good!' I have reason to say it; and, by the powers, it will not be said only. I will make evil my good after a fashion of my own; but how much good or how little evil, will be yet another question."

I was interested, in spite of myself, by the vehemence and unusual seriousness of my companion's manner. It somewhat harmonized with my own temper, and in a measure beguiled me into a momentary heedlessness of my particular griefs. I urged him to a more frank statement of the things that troubled him.

"Can I serve you in anything?" was the inquiry which concluded my assurance that I was sufficiently his friend to sympathize with him in his afflictions.

"You can serve me, and I need your service. You can serve me in two respects: nay, if you do not, I know not which side to turn for service. In the first place, then, I wish a hundred dollars, and I wish it to-night. In the next place, I wish a companion—a man not easily scared, who will follow where I lead him, and take part in a 'knock down and drag out,' if it should become necessary, without asking the why and the wherefore."

"You shall have the money, Kingsley."

"Stay! Perhaps I may never pay it you again."

"I shall regret that, for I can ill afford to lose any such sum; but, even to know that would not prevent me from lending you in your need. It is enough that you are in want. You tell me you are."

"I am; but my wants are not such as a pure moralist, however strong might be his friendship, would be disposed to gratify. I shall stake that money on the roll of the dice."

"Impossible! You do not game!"

"True as a gospel! Hark you, Clifford, and save us the homily. I am a ruined man—ruined by the d——d dice and the deceptive cards. I shall pay you back the hundred dollars, but I shall have precious little after that."

"But, surely, I was not misinformed. You were rich a few years ago."

"A few months! But the case is the same. I am poor now.

My riches had wings. I am reduced to my tail-feathers; but I will flourish with these to the last. I have fallen among thieves They have clipped my plumage—close! close! They have stripped me of everything, but some small matters which, when sold, will just suffice to get me horse or halter. Some dirty acres in Alabama, are all I absolutely have remaining of any real value. But there is one thing that I may have, if I stake boldly for it."

"You will only lose again. The hope of a gamester rises, in due degree, with the increasing lightness of his pockets."

"Do not mistake me. I hope nothing from your hundred dollars; indeed, fifty will answer. I propose to employ it only as a pretext. I expect to lose it, and lose it this very night. But it will give me an opportunity to ascertain what I have suspected—too late, indeed, to save myself—that I have been the victim of false dice and figured cards. You say you will let me have the money—will you go with me—will you see me through?"

He extended his hand as he spoke, I grasped it. He shook it with a hearty feeling, while a bright smile almost dissipated the cloud from his face.

"You are a man, Clifford; and now, would you believe it, our excellent, immaculate young friend, Mr. William Edgerton, refused me this money."

"Strange! Edgerton is not selfish—he is not mean. From *that* vice he is certainly free."

"By G–d, I don't know that! He refused me the money, refused to go with me. I saw him at eight o'clock, at his own room, where he was rigging himself out for some d——d tea-drinking; told him my straits, my losses, my object and all; and what was his plea, think you? Why, he disapproved of gambling; couldn't think of lending me a sixpence for any such purpose; and, as for going into such a suspected quarter as a gambling-house—wouldn't do it for the world! Was there ever such a puritan—such a humbug!"

I did William Edgerton only justice in my reply:—

"I've no doubt, Kingsley, that such are his real principles. He would have lent you thrice the money, freely, had not your object been avowed."

"But what a devil sort of despotism is that! Can't a friend get drunk, or game, or swagger? may he not depart from the highway, and sidle into an alley, without souring his friend's temper and making him stingy? I don't understand it at all. I'm glad, at least, to find you are of another sort of stuff."

"Nay, Kingsley, I will lend you the money—go with you, as you desire; but, understand me, I do not, no more than Edgerton, approve of this gambling."

"Tut, tut! I don't want you to preach, though I could hear you with a devilish sight better temper than him. There's a hundred things that one's friend don't approve of, but shall he desert him for all that? Leave him to be plucked, and kicked and abandoned; and, moralizing, with a grin over his fate, say, 'I told you so!' No! no! Give me the fellow that'll stand by me—keep me out of evil, if he can, but stand by me, nevertheless, at all events; and not suffer me to be swallowed up at the last moment, when an outstretched finger might save!"

"But, am I to think, Kingsley, that my help can do this?"

"No! not exactly—it may—but if it does not, what then? I shall lose the money, but you sha'n't. But, truth to speak, Clifford, I do not propose to myself the recovery of what is lost. I know I have been the prey of sharpers. That is to say, I have every reason to believe so, and I have had a hint to that effect. I have a spice of the devil in me, accordingly—a mocking, mortifying devil, that jeers me with my d——d simplicity; and I propose to go and let the swindlers know, in a way as little circuitous as possible, that I am not blind to the fact that they have made an ass of me. There will be some satisfaction, in that. I will write myself down an ass, for their benefit, only to enjoy the satisfaction of kicking a little like one. I invite you on a kicking expedition."

I felt for my dagger in my bosom, as I answered: "Very good! Have you weapons?"

"Hickory! You see! a moderate axe-handle, that'll make its sentiments understood You are warned; you see what

you are to expect. I will not take you in. Are you ready for a scratch?"

"Allons!" I replied indifferently. The truth is, my bosom was full of a recklessness of a far more sweeping character than his own. I was in the mood for strife. It promised only the more thoroughly to prepare me for the darker trial which was before me, and which my secret soul was meditating all the while with an intense and gloomy tenacity of purpose.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MORALS OF ENTERPRISE.

I GOT him the money he required; and we were about to set forth, when he exclaimed abruptly:—

"Put money in thy own purse, Clifford. It may be necessary to practise a little *ruse de guerre*. In playing my game, it may be important that you should seem to play one also. You have no scruples to fling the dice or flirt the cards for the nonce."

"None! But I should like to know your plans. Tell me, in the first place, your precise object."

"Simply to detect certain knaves, and save certain fools. The knaves have ruined me, and I make no lamentations; but there are others in their clutches still, quite as ignorant as myself, who may be saved before they are stripped entirely. The object is not a bad one; for the rest, trust to me. I mean no harm; a little mischief only; and, at most, a tweak of one proboscis or more. There's risk, of a certainty, as there is in sucking an egg; but you are a man! Not like that d——d milksop, who gives up his friend as soon as he gets poor, and proffers him a sermon by way of telling him—precious information, truly—that he's in a fair way to the devil. The toss of a copper for such friendship."

The humor of Kingsley tallied somewhat with my own. It had in it a spice of recklessness which pleased me. Perhaps, too, it tended somewhat to relieve and qualify the intenseness of that excitement in my brain, which sometimes rose to such a pitch as led me to apprehend madness. That I was a monomaniac has been admitted, perhaps not a moment too soon

for the author's candor. The sagacity of the reader made him independent of the admission.

"Your beggar," said he, somewhat abruptly, "has the only true feeling of independence. Absolutely, I never knew till now what it was to be thoroughly indifferent to what might come to-morrow. I positively care for nothing. I am the first prince Sans Souci. That shall be my title when I get among the Cumanches. I will have a code of laws and constitution to suit my particular humor, and my chief penalties shall be inflicted upon your fellows who grunt. A sigh shall incur a week's solitary confinement; a sour look, pillory; and for a groan, the hypochondriac shall lose his head! My prime minister shall be the fellow who can longest use his tongue without losing his temper; and the man who can laugh and jest shall always have his plate at my table. Good-humored people shall have peculiar privileges. It shall be a certificate in one's favor, entitling him to so many acres, that he takes the world kindly. Such a man shall have two wives, provided he can keep them peacefully in the same house. His daughters shall have dowries from government. The prince of Sans Souci will himself provide for them."

I made some answer, half jest, half earnest, in a mood of mocking bitterness, which, perhaps, more truly accorded with the temper of both of us. He did not perceive the bitterness, however.

"You jest, but mine is not altogether jest. Half-serious glimpses of what I tell you float certainly before my eyes. Such things may happen yet, and the southwest is the world in which you are yet to see many wondrous things. The time must come when Texas shall stretch to Mexico. These miserable slaves and reptiles — mongrel Spaniards and mongrel Indians — can not very long bedevil that great country. It must fall into other hands. It must be ours; and who, when that time comes, will carry into the field more thorough claims than mine. Master of myself, fearing nothing, caring for nothing; with a gallant steed that knows my voice, and answers with whinny and pricked ears to my encouragement; with a rifle that can clip a Mexican — dollar or man — at a hundred yards, and a heart that can defy the devil over his own dish, and with

but one spoon between us—and who so likely to win his principality as myself? Look to see it, Clifford, I shall be a prince in Mexico; and when you hear of the prince Sans Souci be assured you know the man. Seek me then, and ask what you will. You have *carte blanche* from this moment."

"I shall certainly keep it in mind, prince."

"Do so: laugh as you please; it is only becoming that you should laugh in the presence of Sans Souci; but do not laugh in token of irreverence. You must not be too skeptical. It does not follow because I am a dare-devil that I am a thoughtless one. I have been so, perhaps, but from this moment I go to work! I shall be fettered by fortune no longer. Thank Heaven, that is now done—gone—lost; I am free from its incumbrance! I feel myself a prince, indeed; a man, every inch of me. This night I devote as a fitting finish to my old lifeless existence.

"Hear me!" he continued; "you laugh again, Clifford—very good! Laugh on, but hear me. You shall hear more of me in time to come. I fancy I shall be a fellow of considerable importance, not in Texas simply, or in Mexico, but here—here in your own self-opinionated United States. Suppose a few things, and go along with me while I speak them. That Texas must stretch to Mexico I hold to be certain. A very few years will do that. It needs only thirty thousand more men from our southern and southwestern States, and the brave old English tongue shall arouse the best echoes in the city of Montezuma! That done, and floods of people pour in from all quarters. It needs nothing but a feeling of security and peace—a conviction that property will be tolerably safe, under a tolerably stable government—in other words, an Anglo-Saxon government—to tempt millions of discontented emigrants from all quarters of the world. Will this result have no results of its own, think you? Will the immense resources of Mexico and Texas, represented, as they then will be, by a stern, pressing, performing people, have no effect upon these states of yours? They will have the greatest; nay, they will become essential to balance your own federal weight, and keep you all in equilibrio. For look you, the first hubbub with Great Britain gives you Canada, at the expense of some of your coast-towns, a few

millions of treasure, and the loss of fifty thousand men. A bad exchange for the south; for Canada will make six ponderous states, the policy and character of which will be New England all over. To balance this you will have your Florida territory,* of which two feeble states may be made. Not enough for your purposes. But the same war with England will render it necessary that your fleet should take possession of Cuba; which, after a civil apology to Spain for taking such a liberty with her possessions, and, perhaps, a few millions by way of hush-money, you carve into two more states, and, in this manner, try to bolster up your federal relations. How many of her West India islands Great Britain will be able to keep after such a war, is another problem, the solution of which will depend upon the relative strength of fleets and success of seamanship. These islands, which should of right be ours, and without which we can never be sure against any maritime power so great and so arrogant as England, once conquered by our arms, find their natural, moral, and social affinities in the southern states entirely; and, so far, contribute to strengthen you in your congressional conflicts. But these are not enough, for the simple reason that the population of states, purely agricultural, never makes that progress which is made in this respect by a commercial and manufacturing people. With the command of the gulf, the possession of an independent fleet by the Texans, the political characteristics of the states of Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas, must undergo certain marked changes, which can only be neutralized by the adoption, on the part of these states, of a new policy corresponding with their change of interests. How far the cultivation of cotton by Texas will lead to its abandonment in Carolina and Georgia, is a question which the next ten years must solve. That they will be compelled to abandon it is inevitable, unless they can succeed in raising the article at six cents; a probability which no cotton-planter in either of these states will be willing to contemplate now for an instant. Meanwhile, Texas is spreading herself right and left. She conquers the Cumanches, subdues the native mongrel Mexicans. Her Houstons and Lamars are succeeded by other and abler men,

* Florida, since admitted, but unhappily, as a single state.

under whose control the evils of government, which followed the sway of such small animals as the Guerreros, and the Bolivars, the Bustamentés, and Sant' Annas, are very soon eradicated; and the country, the noblest that God ever gave to man, in the hands of men, becomes a country!—a great and glorious country—stretching from the gulf to the Pacific, and providing the natural balance, which, in a few years, the southern states of this Union will inevitably need, by which alone your great confederacy will be kept together. You see, therefore, why I speed to Texas. Should I not, with my philosophy, my horse, and my rifle—not to speak of stout heart and hand—reasonably aspire to the principality of Sans Souci? Laugh, if you please, but be not irreverent. You shall have *carte blanche* then if you will have a becoming faith now, on the word of a prince I say it, It is written—Sans Souci."*

"Altissimo, excellentissimo, serenissimo!"

"Bravissimo, you improve; you will make a courtier—but mum now about my projects. We must suppress our dignities here. We are at the entrance of our hell!"

We had reached the door of a low habitation in a secluded street. The house was of wood—an ordinary hovel of two stories. A cluster of similar fabrics surrounded it, most of which, I afterward discovered—though this fact could not be conjectured by an observer from the street—were connected by blind alleys, inner courts, and chambers and passages running along the ground floors. We stopped an instant, Kingsley having his hand upon the little iron knocker, a single black ring, that worked against an ordinary iron knob.

"Before I knock," said he, in a whisper, "before I knock, Clifford, let me say that if you have any reluctance—"

"None! none! knock!"

"You will meet with some dirty rascals, and you must not only meet them with seeming civility, but as if you shared in their tastes—sought the same objects only—the getting of money—the only object which alone is clearly comprehensible by their understanding."

"Go ahead! I will see you through."

* All these speculations were written in 1840–'41. I need not remark upon those which have since been verified.

"A word more! Get yourself in play at a different table from me. You will find rogues enough around, ready to relieve you of your Mexicans. Leave me to my particular enemy; you will soon see whose shield I touch—but keep an occasional eye upon us; and all that I ask farther at your hands, should you see us by the ears, is to keep other fingers from taking hold of mine."

A heavy stroke of the knocker, followed by three light ones and a second heavy stroke, produced us an answer from within. The door unclosed, and by the light of a dim lamp, I discovered before me, as a sort of warden, a little yellow, weather-beaten, skin-dried Frenchman, whom I had frequently before seen at a fruit-shop in another part of the city. He looked at me, however, without any sign of recognition—with a blank, dull, indifferent countenance; motioned us forward in silence, and reclosing the door, sunk into a chair immediately behind it. I followed my companion through a passage which was unfathomably dark, up a flight of stairs, which led us into a sort of refreshment room. Tables were spread, with decanters, glasses, and tumblers upon them, that appeared to be in continual use. In a recess, stood that evil convenience of most American establishments, whether on land or sea, a liquor bar; its shelves crowded with bottles, all of which seemed amply full, and ready to complete the overthrow of the victim, which the other appliances of such a dwelling must already have actively begun.

"Here you may take in the Dutch courage, Clifford, should you lack the native. This, I know, is not the case with you, and yet the novelty of one's situation frequently overcomes a sensitive mind like fear. Perhaps a julep may be of use."

"None for me. I need no farther stimulant than the mere sense of *mouvement*. I take fire, like a wheel, by my own progress."

"Pretty much the same case with myself. But I have been in the habit of drinking here, of late, and too deeply. To-night, however, as I said before, ends all these habits. If there is honey in the carcass, and strength from the sleep, there is wisdom from the folly, and virtue from the vice. There is a moral as well as a physical recoil, that most certainly follows the overcharge; and really, speaking according to my sincere conviction,

I never felt myself to be a better man, than just at this moment when I am about to do that which my own sense of morality fails altogether to justify. I do not know that I make you understand my feelings; I scarcely understand them myself; but of this sort they are, and I am really persuaded that I never felt in a better disposition to be a good man and a working man than just at the close of a career which has been equally profligate and idle."

I think my companion can be understood. There seems, in fact very little mystery in his moral progress. I understood him, but did not answer. I was not anxious to keep up the ball of conversation which he had begun with a spirit so mixed up of contradictions—so earnest yet so playful. A deep sense of shame unquestionably lurked beneath his levity; and yet I make no question that he felt in truth, and for the first time, that degree of mental hardihood of which he boasted.

He advanced through the refreshment-room, to a door which led to an apartment in an adjoining tenement. It was closed, but unfastened. The sound of voices, an occasional buzz, or a slight murmur, came to our ears from within; that of rattling dice and rolling balls was more regular and more intelligible. Kingsley laid his hand upon the latch, and looked round to me. His eye was kindled with a playful sort of malicious light. A smile of pleasant bitterness was on his lips. He said to me in a whisper:—

"Stake your money slowly. A Mexican is the lowest stake. Keep to that, and lose as little as possible. You will soon see me sufficiently busy, and I will endeavor to urge my labors forward, so as to make your purgatory a short one. I shall only wait till I feel myself cheated in the game, to begin that which I came for. See that I have fair play in *that*, *mon ami*, and I care very little about the other."

He lifted the latch as he concluded, and I followed him into the apartment.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE HELL.

THE scene that opened upon us was, to me, a painfully interesting one. It was a mere hell, without any of those attractive adjuncts which, in a diseased state of popular refinement, such as exists in the fashionable atmospheres of London and Paris, provides it with decorations, and conceals its more discouraging and offensive externals. The charms of music, lovely women, gay lights, and superb drapery and furniture, were here entirely wanting. No other arts beyond the single passion for hazard, which exists, I am inclined to think, in a greater or less degree in every human breast, were here employed to beguile the young and unsuspecting mind into indulgence. The establishment into which I had fallen, seemed to presuppose an acquaintance, already formed, of the gamester with his fascinating vice. It was evidently no place to seduce the uninitiate. The passion must have been already awakened—the guardianship of the good angel lulled into indifference or slumber—before the young mind could be soon reconciled to the moral atmosphere of such a scene.

The apartment was low and dimly lighted. Groups of small tables intended for two persons were all around. In the centre of the floor were tables of larger size, which were surrounded by the followers of Pharo. Unoccupied tables, here and there, were sprinkled with cards and domino; while, as if to render the characteristics of the place complete, a vapor of smoke and a smell of beer assailed our senses as we entered.

There were not many persons present—I conjectured, at a glance, that there might be fifteen; but we heard occasional voices from an inner room, and a small door opening in the rear discovered a retreat like that we occupied, in the dim light of

which I perceived moving faces and shadows, and Kingsley informed me that there were several rooms all similarly occupied with ours.

An examination of the persons around me, increased the unpleasant feelings which the place had inspired. With the exception of a few, the greater number were evidently superior to their employments. Several of them were young men like my companion — men not yet lost to sensibility, who looked up with some annoyance as they beheld Kingsley accompanied by a stranger. Two or three of the inmates were veteran gamesters. You could see *that* in their business-like nonchalance — their rigid muscles — the manner at once demure and familiar. They were evidently "*habitués de l'enfer*" — men to whom cards and dice were as absolutely necessary now, as brandy and tobacco to the drunkard. These men were always at play. Even the smallest interval found them still shuffling the cards, and looking up at every opening of the door, as if in hungering anticipation of the prey. At such periods alone might you behold any expression of anxiety in their faces. This disappeared entirely the moment that they were in possession of the victim. That imperturbable composure which distinguished them was singularly contrasted with the fidgety eagerness and nervous rapidity by which you could discover the latter; and I glanced over the operations of the two parties, as they were fairly shown in several sets about the room, with a renewed feeling of wonder how a man so truly clever and strong, in some things, as Kingsley, should allow himself to be drawn so deeply into such low snares; the tricks of which seemed so apparent, and the attractions of which, in the present instance, were obviously so inferior and low. I little knew by what inoffensive and gradual changes the human mind, having once commenced its downward progress, can hurry to the base; nor did I sufficiently allow for that love of hazard itself, in games of chance, which I have already expressed the opinion, is natural to the proper heart of man, belongs to a rational curiosity, and arises, most probably, from that highest property of his intellect, namely, the love of art and intellectual ingenuity. It would be very important to know this fact, since then, instead of the blind hostility which is entertained for sports of this description, by

certain classes of moralists among us, we might so employ their ministry as to deprive them of their hurtfulness and make them permanently beneficial in the cause of good education.

Kingsley seemed to conjecture my thoughts. A smile of lofty significance expressing a feeling of mixed scorn and humility, rose upon his countenance—as if admitting his own feebleness, while insisting upon his recovered strength. A sentence which he uttered to me in a whisper, at this moment, was intended to convey some such meaning.

"It was only when thrown to the earth, Clifford, that the wrestler recovered his strength."

"That fable," I replied, "proves that he was no god, at least. Of the earth, earthy, he found strength only in his sphere. The moment he aspired above it the god crushed him. I doubt if Hercules could have derived any benefit from the same source."

"Ah! I am no Hercules, but you will also find that I am no Antæus. I fall, but I rise again, and I am not crushed. This is peculiarly the source of *human* strength."

"Better not to fall."

"Ah! you are too late from Utopia. But—"

We were interrupted; a voice at my elbow—a soft, clear, insinuating voice addressed my companion:—

"Ah, Monsieur Kingsley, I rejoice to see you."

Kingsley gave me a single look, which said everything, as he turned to meet the new-comer. The latter continued:—

"Though worsted in that last encounter, you do not despair, I see."

"No! why should I?"

"True, why? Fortune baffles skill, but what of that? She is capricious. Her despotism is feminine; and in her empire, more certainly than any other, it may be said boldly, that, with change of day there is change of doom. It is not always rain."

"Perhaps not, but we may have such a long spell of it that everything is drowned. 'It's a long lane,' says the proverb, 'that has no turn;' but a man be done up long before he gets to the turning place."

The other replied by some of the usual commonplaces by

which, in condescending language, the gamester provokes and stimulates his unconscious victim. Kingsley, however, had reached a period of experience which enabled him to estimate these phrases at their proper worth.

"You would encourage me," he said quietly, and in tones which, to the unnoteful ear, would have seemed natural enough, but which, knowing him as I did, were slightly sarcastic, and containing a deeper signification than they gave out: "but you *are* the better player. I am now convinced of that. Something there is in fortune, doubtless; my self-esteem makes me willing to admit that; and yet I do not deceive myself. You have been too much for me—you are!"

"The difference is trifling, very trifling, I suspect. A little more practice will soon reconcile that."

"Ha! ha! you forget the practice is to be paid for."

"True, but it is the base spirit only that scruples at the cost of its accomplishments."

"Surely, surely!"

"You are fresh for the encounter to-night?"

"Pleasantly put! Is the query meant for the player or his purse?"

"Good, very good! Why, truly, there is no necessary affinity between them."

"And yet the one without the other would scarcely be able to commend himself to so excellent an artist as Mr. Latour Cleveland. Clifford, let me introduce you to my *enemy;* Mr. Cleveland, my *friend.*"

In this manner was I introduced. Thus was I made acquainted with the particular individual whom it was the meditated purpose of Kingsley to expose. But, though thus marked in the language of his introduction, there was nothing in the tone or manner of my companion, at all calculated to alarm the suspicions of the other. On the contrary, there was a sort of reckless joviality in the air of *abandon*, with which he presented me and spoke. A natural curiosity moved me to examine Cleveland more closely. He was what we should call, in common speech, a very elegant young man. He was probably thirty or thirty-five years of age, tall, graceful, rather slenderish, and of particular nicety in his dress. All his clothes were

disposed with the happiest precision. White kid-gloves covered his taper fingers. Withdrawn, a rich diamond blazed upon one hand, while a seal-ring, of official dimensions, with characters cut in lava, decorated the other. His movements betrayed the same nice method which distinguished the arrangement of his dress. His evolutions might all have been performed by trumpet signal, and to the sound of measured music. He was evidently one of those persons whose feelings are too little earnest, ever to affect their policy; too little warm ever to disparage the rigor of their customary play; one of those cold, nice men, who, without having a single passion at work to produce one condition of feeling higher than another, are yet the very ideals of the most narrow and concentrated selfishness. His face was thin, pale, and intelligent. His lips were thick, however—the eyes bright, like those of a snake, but side-looking, never direct, never upward, and always with a smiling shyness in their glance, in which a suspicious mind like my own would always find sufficient occasion for distrust.

Mr. Cleveland bestowed a single keen glance upon me while going through the ordeal of introduction. But his scrutiny labored under one disadvantage. His eyes did not encounter mine! One loses a great deal, if his object be the study of human nature, if he fails in this respect.

"Much pleasure in making your acquaintance, Mr. Clifford; trust, however, you will find me no worse enemy than your friend has done."

"If he find *you* no worse, he will find himself no better. He will pay for his enmity, whatever its degree, as I have done, and be wiser, by reason of his losses."

"Ah! you think too much of your ill fortunes. That is bad. It takes from your confidence and so enfeebles your skill. You should think of it less seriously. Another cast, and the tables change. You will have your revenge."

"I *will!*" said Kingsley with some emphasis, and a gravity which the other did not see. He evidently heard the words only as he had been accustomed to hear them—from the lips of young gamesters who perpetually delude themselves with hopes based upon insane expectations. A benignant smile mantled the cheeks of the gamester.

"Ah, well! I am ready; but if you think me too much for you—"

He paused. The taunt was deliberately intended. It was the customary taunt of the gamester. On the minds of half the number of young men, it would have had the desired effect—of goading vanity, and provoking the self-esteem of the conceited boy into a sort of desperation, when the powers of sense and caution become mostly suspended, and no unnecessary suspicion or watchfulness then interferes to increase the difficulty of plucking the pigeon. I read the smile on Kingsley's lip. It was brief, momentary, pleasantly contemptuous. Then, suddenly, as if he had newly recollected his policy, his countenance assumed a new expression—one more natural to the youth who has been depressed by losses, vexed at defeat, but flatters himself that the atonement is at hand. Perhaps, something of the latent purpose of his mind increased the intense bitterness in the manner and tones of my companion.

"Too much for me, Mr. Cleveland! No, no! You are willing, I see, to rob good fortune of some of her dues. You crow too soon. I have a shrewd presentiment that I shall be quite too much *for you* to-night."

A pleasant and well-satisfied smile of Cleveland answered the speaker.

"I like that," said he; "it proves two things, both of which please me. Your trifling losses have not hurt your fortunes, nor the adverse run of luck made you despond of better success hereafter. It is something of a guaranty in favor of one's performance that he is sure of himself. In such case he is equally sure of his opponent."

"Look to it, then, for I have just that sort of self-guaranty which makes me sure of mine. I shall play deeply, that I may make the most of my presentiments. Nay, to show you how confident I am, this night restores me all that I have lost, or leaves me nothing more to lose."

The eyes of the other brightened.

"That is said like a man. I thank you for your warning. Shall we begin?"

"Ready, ay, ready!" was the response of Kingsley, as he turned to one of the tables. Quietly laying down upon it the

short, heavy stick which he carried, he threw off his gloves, and rubbed his hands earnestly together, laughing the while without restraint, as if possessed suddenly of some very pleasant and ludicrous fancy.

"They laugh who win," remarked Cleveland, with something of coldness in his manner.

"Ha! ha! ha!" was the only answer of Kingsley to this remark. The other continued—and I now clearly perceived that his purpose was provocation:—

"It is certainly a pleasure to win your money, Kingsley—you bear it with so much philosophy. Nay, it seems to give you pleasure, and thus lessens the pain I should otherwise feel in receiving the fruits of my superiority."

"Ha! ha! ha!" again repeated Kingsley. "Excuse me, Mr. Cleveland. I am reminded of your remark, 'They laugh who win.' I am laughing, as it were, anticipatively. I am so certain that I shall have my revenge to-night."

Cleveland looked at him for a moment with some curiosity, then called:—

"Philip!"

He was answered by a young mulatto—a tall, good-looking fellow, who approached with a mixed air of equal deference and self-esteem, plaited frills to a most immaculately white shirt-collar, a huge bulbous breastpin in his bosom, chains and seals, and all the usual equipments of Broadway dandyism. The fellow approached us with a smile; his eyes looking alternately to Cleveland and Kingsley, and, as I fancied, with no unequivocal sneer in their expression, as they settled on the latter. A significance of another kind appeared in the look of Cleveland as he addressed him.

"Get us the pictures, Philip—the latest cuts—and bring—ay, you may bring the ivories."

In a few moments, the preliminaries being despatched, the two were seated at a table, and a couple of packs of cards were laid beside them. Kingsley drew my attention to the cards. They were of a kind that my experience had never permitted me to see before. In place of ordinary kings and queens and knaves, these figures were represented in attitudes and costumes the most indecent—such as the prolific genius of Parisian

bawdry alone could conceive and delineate. It seems to be a general opinion among rogues that knavery is never wholly triumphant unless the mind is thoroughly degraded; and for this reason it is, perhaps, that establishments devoted to purposes like the present, have, in most countries, for their invariable adjuncts, the brothel and the bar-room. If they are not in the immediate tenement, they are sufficiently nigh to make the work of moral prostitution comparatively easy, in all its ramifications, with the young and inconsiderate mind. Kingsley turned over the cards, and I could see that while affecting to show me the pictures he was himself subjecting the cards to a close inspection of another kind. This object was scarcely perceptible to myself, who knew his suspicions, and could naturally conjecture his policy. It did not excite the alarm of his antagonist.

The parties sat confronting each other. Kingsley drew forth a wallet, somewhat ostentatiously, which he laid down beside him. The sight of his wallet staggered me. By its bulk I should judge it to have held thousands; yet he had assured me that he had nothing beside, the one hundred dollars which he had procured from me. My surprise increased as I saw him open the wallet, and draw from one of its pockets the identical roll which I had put into his hands. The bulk of the pocket-book seeemed scarcely to be diminished. My suspicions were beginning to be roused. I began to think that he had told me a falsehood; but he looked up at this instant, and a bright manly smile on his deep purposeful countenance, reassured me. I felt that there was some policy in the business which was not for me then to fathom. The cards were cut. A box of dice was also in the hands of Cleveland.

"Spots or pictures?" said Cleveland.

"Pictures first, I suppose," said Kingsley, "till the blood gets up. The ivories then as the most rapid. But these pictures are really so tempting. A new supply, Philip!"

"Just received, sir," said the other.

"And how shall we begin?" demanded Cleveland, drawing a handful of bills, gold, and silver, from his pocket; "yellow, white, or brown?"

It was thus, I perceived, that gold, silver, and paper money, were described.

"Shall it be child's play, or—"

"Man's, man's!" replied Kingsley, with some impatience. "I am for beginning with a cool hundred," and, to my consternation, he unfolded the roll he had of me, counted out the bills, refolded them and placed them in a saucer, where they were soon covered with a like sum by his antagonist. I was absolutely sickened, and stared aghast upon my reckless companion. He looked at me with a smile.

"To your own game, Clifford. You will find men enough for your money in either of the rooms. Should you run short, come to me."

Thus confidently did he speak; yet he had actually but the single hundred which he had so boldly staked on the first issue. I thought him lost; but he better knew his game than I. He also knew his man. The eyes of Cleveland were on the huge wallet in reserve, of which the "cool hundred" might naturally be considered a mere sample. I had not courage to wait for the result, but wandered off, with a feeling not unallied to terror, into an adjoining apartment.

CHAPTER XXX.

FALSE DICE.

THOUGH confounded with what I had seen of the proceedings of Kingsley, I was yet willing to promote, so far as I could, the purpose for which we came. I felt too, that, unless I played, that purpose, or my own, might reasonably incur suspicion. To rove through the several rooms of a gambling-house, surveying closely the proceedings of others, without partaking, in however slight a degree, in the common business of the establishment, was neither good policy nor good manners. Unless there to play, what business had I there? Accordingly I resolved to play. But of these games I knew nothing. It was necessary to choose among them, and, without a choice I turned to one of the tables where the genius of Roulette presided. A motley group, none of whom I knew, surrounded it. I placed my dollar upon one of the spots, red or black, I know not which, and saw it, in a moment after, spooned up with twenty others by the banker. I preferred this form of play to any other, for the simple reason that it did not task my own faculties, and left me free to bestow my glances on the proceedings of my friend. But I soon discovered that the contagion of play is irresistible; and so far from putting my stake down at intervals, and with philosophic indifference, I found myself, after a little while, breathlessly eager in the results. These, after the first few turns of the machine, had ceased to be unfavorable. I was confounded to discover myself winning. Instead of one I put down two Mexicans.

"Put down ten," said one of the bystanders, a dark, sulky-looking little yellow man, who seemed a veteran at these places. "You are in luck—make the most of it."

The master of the ceremonies scowled upon the speaker; and

this determined me to obey his suggestions. I did so, and doubled the money; left my original stake and the winnings on the same spot, and doubled that also; and it was not long before, under this stimulus of success, and the novelty of my situation, I found myself as thoroughly anxious and intensely interested, as if I had gone to the place in compliance with a natural passion. I know not how long I had continued in this way, but I was still fortunate. I had doubled my stakes repeatedly, and my pockets were crammed with money.

"Stop now, if you are wise," whispered the same sulky-looking little man who had before urged me to go on more boldly, as he sidled along by me for this object; "never ride a good horse to death. There's a time to stop just as there's a time to push. You had better stop now. Stake another dollar and you lose all your winnings."

"Let the gentleman play his own game, Brinckoff. I don't see why you come here to spoil sport."

Such was the remark of the keeper of the table. He had overheard my counsellor. He felt his losses, and was angry. I saw that, and it determined me. I took the counsel of the stranger. I was the more willing to do so, as I reproached myself for my inattention to my friend. It was time to see what had been his progress, and I prepared to leave the theatre of my own success. Before doing so, I turned to my counsellor, and thus addressed him: "Your advice has made me win; I trust I will not offend a gentleman who has been so courteous, by requesting him to take my place upon a small capital."

I put twenty pieces into his hand.

"I am but a young beginner," I continued, "and I owe you for my first lesson."

"You are too good," he said, but his hand closed over the dollars. The keeper of the table renewed his murmurs of discontent as he saw me turn away.

"Ah! bah! Petit, what's the use to grumble?" demanded my representative. "Do you suppose I will give up my sport for yours? When would I get a sixpence to stake, if it were not that I was kind to young fellows just beginning? There; growl no more; the twenty Mexicans upon the red!"

The next minute my gratuity was swallowed up in the great

spoon of the banker. I was near enough to see the result. I placed another ten pieces in the hand of the unsuccessful gambler.

"Very good," said he; "very much obliged to you: but. if you please, I will do no more to-night. It's not my lucky night. I've lost every set."

"As you please — when you please."

"You are a gentleman," he said; "the sooner you go home the better. A young beginner seldom wins in the small hours."

This was said in another whisper. I thanked him for his further suggestion, and turned away, leaving him to a side squabble with the banker, who finally concluded by telling him that he never wished to see him at his table.

"The more fool you, Petit," said Brinckoff; "for the youngster that wins comes back, and he does not always win. You finish him in the end as you finished me, and what more would you have?"

The rest, and there was much more, was inaudible to me. I hurried from the place somewhat ashamed of my success. I doubt whether I should have had the like feelings had I lost. As it was, never did possession seem more cumbrous than the mixed gold, paper, and silver, with which my pockets were burdened. I gladly thought of Kingsley, to avoid thinking of myself. It was certain, I fancied, that he had not lost, else how could he have continued to play? My anxiety hurried me into the room where I had left him.

They sat together, he and Cleveland, as before. I observed that there was now an expression of anxiety — not intense, but obvious enough — upon the countenance of the latter. Philip, too, the mulatto, stood on one side, contemplating the proceedings with an air of grave doubt and uncertainty in his countenance. No such expression distinguished the face of Kingsley. Never did a light-hearted, indifferent, almost mocking spirit, shine out more clearly from any human visage. At times he chuckled as with inward satisfaction. Not unfrequently he laughed aloud, and his reckless "Ha! ha! ha!" had more than once reached and startled me in the midst of my own play, in the adjoining room. The opponents had discarded their "pictures." They were absolutely rolling dice for their stakes. I

saw that the wallet of Kingsley lay untouched, and quite as full as ever, in the spot where he had first laid it down. A pile of money lay open beside him; the gold and silver pieces keeping down the paper. When he saw me approach, he laughed aloud, as he cried out:—

"Have they disburdened you, Clifford? Help yourself. I am punishing my enemy famously. I can spare it."

A green, sickly smile mantled the lips of Cleveland. He replied in low, soft tones, such as I could only partly hear; and, a moment after, he swept the stake before the two, to his own side of the table. The amount was large, but the features of Kingsley remained unaltered, while his laugh was renewed as heartily as if he really found pleasure in the loss.

"Ha! ha! ha! that is encouraging; but the end is not yet. The tug is yet to come!"

I now perceived that Kingsley took up his wallet with one hand while he spread his handkerchief on his lap with the other. Into this he drew the pile of money which he had loose before on his side of the table, and appeared to busy himself in counting into it the contents of the wallet. This he did with such adroitness, that, though I felt assured he had restored the wallet to his bosom with its bulk undiminished, yet I am equally certain that no such conclusion could have been reached by any other person. This done, he lifted the handkerchief, full as it was, and dashed it down upon the table.

"There! cover that, if you be a man!" was his speech of defiance.

"How much?" huskily demanded Cleveland.

"All!"

"Ah!"

"Yes, all. I know not the number of dollars, cents, or sixpences, but face it with your winnings: there need be no counting. It is loss of time. Stir the stuff with your fingers, and you will find it as good, and as much, as you have here to put against it. On that hangs my fate or yours. Mine for certain! I tell you, Mr. Cleveland, it is all!"

Cleveland lifted the ends of the handkerchief, as if weighing its contents; and then, without more scruple, flung into it a pile not unlike it in bulk and quality: a handful of mixed gold

paper, and silver. Kingsley grasped the dice before him, and with a single shake dashed them out upon the table.

"Six, four, two," cried Philip with a degree of excitement which did not appear in either of the active opponents. Meanwhile my heart was in my mouth. I looked on Kingsley with a sentiment of wonder. Every muscle of his face was composed into the most quiet indifference. He saw my glance, and smilingly exclaimed :—

"I trust to my star, Clifford. Sans Souci—remember!"

No time was allowed for more. The moment was a breathless one. Cleveland had taken up the dice. His manner was that of the most singular deliberation. His eyes were cast down upon the table. His lips strongly closed together; and now it was that I could see the keen, piercing look which Kingsley addressed to every movement of the gambler. I watched him also. He did not immediately throw the dice, and I was conscious of some motion which he made with his hands before he did so. What that motion was, however, I could neither have said nor conceived. But I saw a grim smile, full of intelligence, suddenly pass over Kingsley's lips. The dice descended upon the table with a sound that absolutely made me tremble.

"Five, four, six!" cried Philip, loudly, with tones of evident exultation. I felt a sense like that of suffocation, which was unrelieved even by the seemingly unnatural laughter of my companion. He did laugh, but in a manner to render less strange and unnatural that in which he had before indulged. Even as he laughed he rose and possessed himself of the dice which the other had thrown down.

"The stakes are mine," cried Cleveland, extending his hand toward the handkerchief.

"No!" said Kingsley, with a voice of thunder, and as he spoke, he handed me the kerchief of money, which I grasped instantly, and thrust with some difficulty into my bosom. This was done instinctively; I really had no thoughts of what I was doing. Had I thought at all I should most probably have refused to receive it.

"How!" exclaimed Cleveland, his face becoming suddenly pale. "The cast is mine—fifteen to twelve!"

"Ay, scoundrel, but the game I played for is mine! As for

the cast, you shall try another which you shall relish less. Do you see these?"

He showed the dice which he had gathered from the table. The gambler made an effort to snatch them from his hands.

"Try that again," said Kingsley, "and I lay this hickory over your pate, in a way that shall be a warning to it for ever."

By this time several persons from the neighboring tables and the adjoining rooms, hearing the language of strife, came rushing in. Kingsley beheld their approach without concern. There were several old gamblers among them, but the greater number were young ones.

"Gentlemen," said Kingsley, "I am very glad to see you. You come at a good time. I am about to expose a scoundrel to you."

"You shall answer for this, sir," stammered Cleveland, in equal rage and confusion.

"Answer, shall I? By Jupiter! but you shall answer too! And you shall have the privilege of a first answer, shall you?"

"Mr. Kingsley, what is the meaning of this?" was the demand of a tall, dark-featured man, who now made his appearance from an inner room, and whom I now learned, was, in fact, the proprietor of the establishment.

"Ah! Radcliffe—but before another word is wasted put your fingers into the left breeches pocket of that scoundrel there, and see what you will find."

Cleveland would have resisted. Kingsley spoke again to Radcliffe, and this time in stern language, which was evidently felt by the person to whom it was addressed.

"Radcliffe, your own credit—nay, safety—will depend upon your showing that you have no share in this rogue's practice. Search him, if you would not share his punishment."

The fellow was awed, and obeyed instantly. Himself, with three others, grappled with the culprit. He resisted strenuously, but in vain. He was searched, and from the pocket in question three dice were produced.

"Very good," said Kingsley; "now examine those dice, gentlemen, and see if you can detect one of my initials, the letter 'K,' which I scratched with a pin upon each of them."

The examination was made, and the letter was found, very

small and very faint, it is true, but still legible, upon the ace square of each of the dice.

"Very good," continued Kingsley; "and now, gentlemen, with your leave—"

He opened his hand and displayed the three dice with which Cleveland had last thrown.

"Here you see the dice with which this worthy gentleman hoped to empty my pockets. These are they which he last threw upon the table. He counted handsomely by them! I threw, just before him, with those which you have in your hand. I had contrived to mark them previously, this very evening, in order that I might know them again. Why should he put them in his pocket, and throw with these? As this question is something important, I propose to answer it to your satisfaction as well as my own; and, for this reason, I came here, as you see, prepared to make discoveries."

He drew from his pocket, while he spoke, a small saddler's hammer and steel-awl. Fixing with the sharp point of the awl in the ace spot of the dice, he struck it a single but sudden blow with the hammer, split each of the dice in turn, and disclosed to the wondering, or seemingly wondering, eyes of all around, a little globe of lead in each, inclining to the lowest numeral, and necessarily determining the roll of the dice so as to leave the lightest section uppermost.

"Here, gentlemen," continued Kingsley, "you see by what process I have lost my money. But it is not in the dice alone. Look at these cards. Do you note this trace of the finger-nail, here, and there, and there—scarcely to be seen unless it is shown to you, but clear enough to the person that made it, and is prepared to look for it. Radcliffe, your fellow, Philip, has been concerned in this business. You must dismiss him, or your visiters will dismiss you. Neither myself nor my friends will visit you again—nay, more, I denounce you to the police. Am I understood?"

Radcliffe assented without scruple, evidently not so anxious for justice as for the safety of his establishment. But it appeared that there were others in the room not so well pleased with the result. A hubbub now took place, in which three or four fellows made a rush upon Kingsley—Cleveland urging

and clamoring from the rear, though without betraying much real desire to get into the conflict.

But the assailants had miscalculated their forces. The youngsters in the establishment, regarding Kingsley's development as serving the common cause, were as soon at his side as myself. The scuffle was over in an instant. One burly ruffian was prostrated by a blow from Kingsley's club; I had my share in the prostration of a second, and some two others took to their heels, assisted in their progress by a smart application from every foot and fist that happened to be convenient enough for such a service.

Bnt Cleveland alone remained. Why he had not shared the summary fate of the rest it would be difficult to say, unless it was because he had kept aloof from the active struggle to which he had egged them on. Perhaps, too, a better reason—he was reserved for some more distinguishing punishment. Why he had shown no disposition for flight himself, was answered as soon as Kingsley laid down his club, which he did with a laugh of exemplary good-nature the moment he had felled with it his first assailant. The flight of his allies left the path open between himself and Cleveland, and, suddenly darting upon him, the desperate gambler aimed a blow at his breast with a dirk which he had drawn that instant from his own. He exclaimed as he struck:—

"Here is something that escaped your search. Take this! this!"

Kingsley was just lifting up the cap, which he had worn that night, from the table to his brows. Instinctively he dashed it into the face of his assassin, and his simple evolution saved him. The next moment the fearless fellow had grappled with his enemy, torn the weapon from his grasp, and, seizing him around the body as if he had been an infant, moved with him to an open window looking out upon a neighboring court. The victim struggled, yelled for succor, but before any of us could interpose, the resolute and powerful man in whose hold he writhed and struggled vainly, with the gripe of a master, had thrust him through the opening, his heels, in their upward evolutions, shattering a dozen of the panes as he disappeared from sight below. We all concluded that he was killed. We were in an upper

chamber, which I estimated to be twenty or thirty feet from the ground. I was too much shocked for speech, and rushed to the window, expecting to behold the mangled and bloody corpse of the miserable criminal beneath. The laughter of Radcliffe half reassured me.

"He will not suffer much hurt," said he; "there is something to break his fall."

I looked down, and there the unhappy wretch was seen squatting and clinging to the slippery shingles of an old stable, unhurt, some twelve feet below us, unable to reascend, and very unwilling to adopt the only alternative which the case presented—that of descending softly upon the rank bed of stable-ordure which the provident care of the gardener had raised up on every hand, the reeking fumes of which were potent enough to expel us very soon from our place of watch at the window. Of the further course of the elegant culprit we took no heed. The ludicrousness of his predicament had the effect of turning the whole adventure into merriment among those who remained in the establishment; and availing ourselves of the clamorous mirth of the parties, we made our escape from the place with a feeling, on my part, of indescribable relief.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HOW THE GAME WAS PLAYED.

"WELL, we may breathe awhile," said Kingsley, as we found ourselves once more in the pure air, and under the blue sky of midnight. "We have got through an ugly task with tolerable success. You stood by me like a man, Clifford. I need not tell you how much I thank you."

"I heartily rejoice that you are through with it, Kingsley; but I am not so sure that we can deliberately approve of everything that we may have been required by the circumstances of the case to do."

"What! you did not relish the playing? I respect your scruples, but it does not follow that it must become a habit. You played to enable a friend to get back from a knave what he lost as a fool, and to punish the knavery that he could not well hope to reform. I do not see, considering the amount of possible good which we have done, that the evil is wholly inexcusable."

"Perhaps not; but this heap of money which I have in my bosom—should you have taken it?"

"And why not? Whose should it be, if not mine?"

"You took with you but one hundred dollars. I should say you have more than a thousand here."

"I trust I have," said he coolly. "What of that? I won it fairly, and he played fairly, until the last moment when everything was at stake. His false dice were then called in—and would you have me yield to his roguery what had been the fruits of a fair conflict? No! no! friend of mine! no! no! all these things did I consider well before I took you with me

to-night. I have been meditating this business for a week, from the moment when a friendly fellow hinted to me that I was the victim of knavery."

"But that wallet of money, Kingsley? You assured me that you were pennyless."

"Ah! that wallet bedevilled Mr. Latour Cleveland, as it seems to have bedevilled you. There, by the starlight, look at the contents of this precious wallet, and see how much further your eyes can pierce into the mystery of my proceedings.'

He handed me the wallet, which I opened. To my great surprise, I found it stuffed with old shreds of newspaper, bits of rag, even cotton, but not a cent of money.

"There! are you satisfied? You shall have that wallet, with all its precious contents, as a keepsake from me. It will remind you of a strange scene. It will have a history for you when you are old, which you will tell with a chuckle to your children."

"Children!" I involuntarily murmured, while my voice trembled, and a tear started to my eye. That one word recalled me back, at once, to home, to my particular woes—to all that I could have wished banished for ever, even in the unwholesome stews and steams of a gaming-house. But Kingsley did not suffer me to muse over my own afflictions. He did not seem to hear the murmuring exclamation of my lips. He continued:—

"I have no mysteries from you, and you need, as well as deserve, an explanation. All shall be made clear to you. The reason of this wallet, and another matter which staggered you quite as much—my audacious bet of a cool hundred—your own disconsolate hundred—as a first stake! I have no doubt you thought me mad when you heard me."

I confessed as much. He laughed.

"As I tell you, I had studied my game beforehand, even in its smallest details. By this time, I knew something of the play of most gamblers, and of Mr. Latour Cleveland, in particular. These people do not risk themselves for trifles. They play fairly enough when the temptation is small. They cheat only when the issues are great. I am speaking now of gamesters on the big figure, not of the petty chapmen who pule over

their pennies and watch the exit of a Mexican, with the feelings of one who sees the last wave of a friend's handkerchief going upon the high seas. My big wallet and my hundred-dollar bet were parts of the same system. The heavy stake at the beginning led to the inference that I had corresponding resources. My big wallet lying by me, conveniently and ostentatiously, confirmed this impression. The cunning gambler was willing that I should win awhile. His policy was to encourage me; to persuade me on and on, by gradual stimulants, till all was at stake. Well! I knew this. All was at stake finally, and I had then to call into requisition all the moral strength of which I was capable, so that eye and lip and temper should not fail me at those moments when I would need the address and agency of all.

"The task has been an irksome one; the trial absolutely painful. But I should have been ashamed, once commencing the undertaking, not to have succeeded. He, too, was not impregnable. I found out his particular weakness. He was a vain man; vain of his bearing, which he deemed aristocratic; his person, which he considered very fine. I played with these vanities. Failing to excite him on the subject of the game, I made *himself* my subject. I chattered with him freely; so as to prompt him to fancy that I was praising his style, air, appearance; anon, by some queer jibe, making him half suspicious that I was quizzing him. My frequent laughter, judiciously disposed, helped this effect; and, to a certain extent, I succeeded. He became nervous, and was excited, though you may not have seen it. I saw it in the change of his complexion, which became suddenly quite bilious. I found, too, that he could only speak with some effort, when, if you remember, before we began to play, his tongue, though deliberate, worked pat enough. I felt my power over him momently increase; and I sometimes won where he did not wish it. I do verily believe that he ceased to see the very marks which he himself had made upon the cards. Nervous agitation, on most persons, produces a degree of blindness quite as certainly as it affects the speech. Well, you saw the condition of our funds when you re-appeared. I had determined to bring the business to a close. I had marked the dice, actually before his face, while we took

a spell of rest over a bottle of porter. I had scratched them quietly with a pin which I carried in my sleeve for that purpose, while he busied himself with a fidgety shuffling of the cards. My leg, thrown over one angle of the table, partly covered my operations, and I worked upon the dice in my lap. You may suppose the etching was bad enough, doing precious little credit to the art of engraving in our country. But the thing was thoroughly done, for I had worked myself into a rigorous sort of philosophic desperation which made me as cool as a cucumber. To seem to empty the contents of the wallet into my lap was my next object, and this I succeeded in, without his suspecting that my movement was a sham only. The purse thus made up, I emphatically told him was all I had—this was the truth—and then came the crisis. His trick was to be employed now or never. It was employed, but he had become so nervous, that I caught a sufficient glimpse of his proceedings. I saw the slight o'hand movement which he attempted, and—you know the rest. I regard the money as honestly mine—so far as good morals may recognise the honesty of getting money by gambling;—and thinking so, my dear Clifford, I have no scruple in begging you to share it with me. It is only fit that you, who furnished all the capital—you see I say nothing of the wallet which should, however, be priceless in our eyes—should derive at least a moiety of the profit. It is quite as much yours as mine. I beg you so to consider it."

I need not say, however, that I positively refused to accept this offer. I would take nothing but the hundred which I had lent him, and placed the handkerchief with all its contents into his hands.

"And now, Clifford, I must leave you. You have yet to learn another of my secrets. I take the rail-car at daylight in the morning. I am off for Alabama; and considering my Texan and Mexican projects, I leave you, perhaps, for ever."

"So soon?"

"Yes, everything is ready. There need be no delay. I have no wife nor children to cumber me. My trunks are already packed; my resolve made; my last business transacted

I have some lands in Alabama which I mean to sell. This done, I am off for the great field of performance, south and southwest. You shall hear of me, perhaps may wish to hear *from* me. Here is my address, meanwhile, in Alabama. I shall advise you of my further progress, and shall esteem highly a friendly scrawl from you. If you write, do not fail to tell me what you may hear of Mr. Latour Cleveland, and how he got down from the muck-heap. Write me all about it, Clifford, and whatever else you can about our fools and knaves, for though I leave them without a tear, yet, d—n 'em, I keep 'em in my memory, if it's only for the sake of the old city whom they bedevil."

Enough of our dialogue that night. Kingsley was a fellow of every excellent and some very noble qualities. We did not sympathize in sundry respects, but I parted from him with regret; not altogether satisfied, however, that there were not some defects in that reasoning by which he justified our proceedings with the gamblers. I turned from him with a sad, sick heart. In his absence the whole feeling of my domestic doubts and difficulties rushed back upon me freshly and with redoubled force.

"Children!" I murmured mournfully, as I recalled one of his remarks; "children! children! these, indeed, were blessings; but if we only had love, truth, peace. If that damning doubt were not there!—that wild fear, that fatal, soul-petrifying suspicion!"

I groaned audibly as I traversed the streets, and it seemed as if the pavements groaned hollowly in answer beneath my hurrying footsteps. In a moment more I had absolutely forgotten the recent strife, the strange scene, the accents of my friend; all but that one.

"Children! children! These might bind her to me; might secure her erring affections; might win her to love the father, when he himself might possess no other power to tempt her to love. Ah! why has Providence denied me the blessing of a child?"

Alas! it was not probable that Julia should ever have children. This was the conviction of our physician. Her health and constitution seemed to forbid the hope; and the

gloomy despair under which I suffered was increased by this reflection. Yet, even at that moment, while thus I mused and murmured, my poor wife had been unexpectedly and prematurely delivered of an infant son—a tiny creature, in whom life was but a passing gleam, as of the imperfect moonlight, and of whom death took possession in the very instant of its birth.

CHAPTER XXXII.

SUDDEN LESSON AND NEW SUSPICIONS.

While I had been wasting the precious hours of midnight in a gaming-house, my poor Julia had undergone the peculiar pangs of a mother! While I had been reproaching her in my secret soul for a want of ardency and attachment, she had been giving me the highest proof that she possessed the warmest. These revelations, however, were to reach me slowly; and then, like those of Cassandra, they were destined to encounter disbelief.

Leaving Kingsley, I turned into the street where my wife's mother lived. But the house was shut up—the company gone. I had not been heedful of the progress of the hours. I looked up at the tall, white, and graceful steeple of our ancient church, which towered in serene majesty above us; but, in the imperfect light I failed to read the letters upon the dial-plate. At that moment its solemn chimes pealed forth the hour, as if especially in answer to my quest. How such sounds speak to the very soul at midnight! They seem the voice from Time himself, informing, not man alone, but Eternity, of his progress to that lone night, in which his minutes, hours, days, and years, are equally to be swallowed up and forgotten.

Sweet had been those bells to me in boyhood. Sad were they to me now. I had heard them ring forth merry peals on the holydays of the nation; and peals on the day of national mourning; startling and terrifying peals in the hour of midnight danger and alarm; but never till then had they spoken with such deep and searching earnestness to the most hidden places of my soul. That 'one, two, three, four,' which they

then struck, as they severally pronounced the thrilling monotones, seemed to convey the burden of four impressive acts in a yet unfinished tragedy. My heart beat with a feeling of anxiety, such as overcomes us, when we look for the curtain to rise which is to unfold the mysterious progress of the catastrophe.

That fifth act of mine! what was it to be? Involuntarily my lips uttered the name of William Edgerton! I started as if I had trodden upon a viper. The denouement of the drama at once grew up before my eyes. I felt the dagger in my grasp; I actually drew it from my bosom. I saw the victim before me—a smile upon his lips—a fire in his glance—an ardor, an intelligence, that looked like exulting passion; and my own eyes grew dim. I was blinded; but, even in the darkness, I struck with fatal precision. I felt the resistance, I heard the groan and the falling body; and my hair rose, with a cold, moist life of its own, upon my clammy and shrinking temples.

I recovered from the delusion. My dagger had been piercing the empty air; but the feeling and the horror in my soul were not less real because the deed had been one of fancy only. The foregone conclusion was in my mind, and I well knew that fate would yet bring the victim to the altar.

I know not how I reached my dwelling, but when there I was soon brought to a sober condition of the senses. I found everything in commotion. Mrs. Delaney, late Clifford, was there, busy in my wife's chamber, while her husband, surly with such an interruption to his domestic felicity, even at the threshold, was below, kicking his heels in solemn disquietude in the parlor. The servants had been despatched to bring her and to seek me, in the first moments of my wife's danger. She had consciousness enough for that, and Mrs. Delaney had summoned the physician. He too—the excellent old man, who had assisted us in our clandestine marriage—he too was there; sad, troubled, and regarding me with looks of apprehension and rebuke which seemed to ask why I was abroad at that late hour, leaving my wife under such circumstances. I could not meet his glance with a manly eye. They brought me the dead infant—poor atom of mortality—no longer mortal; but I

turned away from the spectacle. I dared not look upon it. It was the form of a perished hope, ended in a dream! And such a dream! The physician gave me a brief explanation of the condition of things.

"Your wife is very ill. It is difficult to say what will happen. Make up your mind for the worst. She has fever—has been delirious. But she sleeps now under the effect of some medicine I have given her. She will not sleep long; and everything will depend upon her wakening. She must be kept very quiet."

I asked if he could conjecture what should bring about such an event. "Though delicate, Julia was not out of health. She had been well during the evening when I left her."

"You have left her long. This is a late hour, Mr. Clifford, for a young husband to be out. Nothing but matter of necessity could excuse——"

I interrupted him with some gravity:—

"Suppose then it was a matter of necessity—of seeming necessity, at least."

He observed my emotion.

"Do not be angry with me. I assisted your dear wife into the world, Clifford. I would not see her hurried out of it. She is like a child of my own; I feel for her as such."

I said something apologetic, I know not what, and renewed my question.

"She has been alarmed or excited, perhaps; possibly has fallen while ascending the stair. A very slight accident will sometimes suffice to produce such a result with a constitution such as hers. She needs great watchfulness, Clifford; close attention, much solicitude. She needs and deserves it, Clifford."

I saw that the old man suspected me of indifference and neglect. Alas! whatever might be my faults in reference to my wife, indifference was not among them. What he had said, however, smote me to the heart. I felt like a culprit. I dared not meet his eye when, at daylight, he took his departure, promising to return in a few hours.

My excellent mother-in-law was more capable and copious in her details. From her I learned that Julia, though anxious to

depart for some time before, had waited for my return until the last of her guests were about to retire. Among these happened to be Mr. William Edgerton!"

"He offered his carriage, but Julia put off accepting for a long time, saying you would soon return. But at last he pressed her so, and seeing everybody else gone, she concluded to go, and Mr. Delaney helped her into the carriage, and Mr. Edgerton got in too, to see her home; and off they drove, and it was not an hour after, when Becky (the servant-girl) came to rout us up, saying that her mistress was dying. I hurried on my clothes, and Delaney—dear good man—he was just as quick; and off we came, and sure enough, we found her in a bad way, and nobody with her but the servants; and I sent off after you, and after the doctor; and he just came in time to help her; but she went on wofully; was very lightheaded; talked a great deal about you; and about Mr. Edgerton; I suppose because he had just been seeing her home; but didn't seem to know and doesn't know to this moment what has happened to her."

I have shortened very considerably the long story which Mrs. Delaney made of it. Rambling as it was—full of nonsense—with constant references to her "dear good man," and her party, the company, herself, her fashion, and frivolities—there was yet something to sting and trouble me at the core of her narration. Edgerton and my wife linger to the last—Edgerton rides home with her—he and she in the carriage, alone, at midnight;—and then this catastrophe, which the doctor thought was a natural consequence of some excitement or alarm.

These facts wrought like madness in my brain. Then, too, in her delirium she raves of *him!* Is not that significant? True, it comes from the lips of that malicious old woman! she, who had already hinted to me that my wife—her daughter—was likely to be as faithless to me as she had been to herself. Still, it is significant, even if it be only the invention of this old woman. It showed what she conjectured—what she thought to be a natural result of these practices which had prompted her suspicions as well as my own.

How hot was the iron-pressure upon my brain — how keen and scorching was that fiery arrow in my soul, when I took my place of watch beside the unconscious form of my wife, God alone can know. If I am criminal — if I have erred with wildest error — surely I have struggled with deepest misery. I have been misled by wo, not temptation! Sore has been my struggle, sore my suffering, even in the moment of my greatest fault and folly. Sore! — how sore!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

STILL THE CLOUD.

For three days and nights did I watch beside the sick bed of my wife. In all this time her fate continued doubtful. I doubt if any anxiety or attention could have exceeded mine; as it was clear to myself that, in spite of jealousy and suspicion, my love for her remained without diminution. Yet this watch was not maintained without some trials far more severe and searching than those which it produced upon the body. Her mind, wandering and purposeless, yet spoke to mine, and renewed all its racking doubts, and exaggerated all its nameless fears. Her veins burned with fever. She was fitfully delirious. Words fell from her at spasmodic moments — strange, incoherent words, but all full of meaning in my ears. I sat beside the bed on one hand, while, on one occasion, her mother occupied a seat upon that opposite. The eyes of my wife opened upon both of us — turned from me, convulsively, with an expression, as I thought, of disgust, then closed — while her lips, taking up their language, poured forth a torrent of threats and reproaches.

I can not repeat her words. They rang in my ears, understood, indeed, but so wildly and thrillingly, that I should find it a vain task to endeavor to remember them. She spoke of persecution, annoyance, beyond propriety, beyond her powers of endurance. She threatened me — for I assumed myself to be the object of her denunciation — with the wrath of some one capable to punish — nay, to rescue her, if need be, by violence, from the clutches of her tyrant. Then followed another change in her course of speech. She no longer threatened or denounced. She derided. Words of bitter scorn and loathing contempt issued from those bright, red, burning, and always

beautiful lips, which I had never supposed could have given forth such utterance, even if her spirit could have been supposed capable of conceiving it. Keen was the irony which she expressed—irony, which so well applied to my demerits in one great respect, that I could not help making the personal application.

"How manly and generous," she proceeded, "was this sort of persecution of one so unprotected, so dependent, so placed, that she must even be silent, and endure without speech or complaint, in the dread of dangers which, however, would not light upon her head. Oh, brave as generous!" she exclaimed, with a burst of tremendous delirium, terminating in a shriek; "oh, brave as generous!—scarcely lion-like, however, for the noble beast rushes upon his victim. He does not prowl, and skulk, and sneak, watching, cat-like, crouching and base, in stealth and darkness. Very noble, but mousing spirit! Beware! Do I not know you now! Fear you not that I will show your baseness, and declare the truth, and guide other eyes to your stealthy practice? Beware! Do not drive me into madness!"

Thus she raved. My conscience applied these stinging words of scorn, which seemed particularly fitted to the mean suspicious watch which I had kept upon her. I could have no thought that they were meant for any other ears than my own, and the crimson flush upon my cheeks was the involuntary acknowledgment which my soul made of the demerits of my unmanly conduct. I fancied that Julia had detected my espionage, and that her language had this object in reference only. But there were other words; and, passing with unexpected transition from the language of dislike and scorn, she now indulged in that of love—language timidly suggestive of love, as if its utterance were restrained by bashfulness, as if it dreaded to be heard. Then a deep sigh followed, as if from the bottom of her heart, succeeded by convulsive sobs, at last ending in a gushing flood of tears.

For the space of half an hour I had been an attentive but suffering listener to this wild raving. My pangs followed every sentence from her lips, believing, as I did, that they were reproachful of myself, and associated with a now unrestrained

expression of passion for another. Gradually I had ceased, in the deep interest which I felt, to be conscious that Mrs. Delaney was present. I leaned across the couch; I bent my ear down toward the lips of the speaker, eager to drink up every feeble sound which might help to elucidate my doubts, and subdue or confirm my suspicions. Then, as the accumulating conviction forced itself, embodied and sharp, like a knife, into my soul, I groaned aloud, and my teeth were gnashed together in the bitterness of my emotion! In that moment I caught the keen gray eyes of my mother-in-law fixed upon me, with a jibing expression, which spoke volumes of mockery. They seemed to say, "Ah! you have it now! The truth is forced upon you at last! You can parry it no longer. I see the iron in your soul. I behold and enjoy your contortions!"

Fiend language! She was something of a fiend! I started from the bedside, and just then a flood of tears came to the relief of my wife, and lessened the excitement of her brain. The tears relieved her. The paroxysm passed away. She turned her eyes upon me, and closed them involuntarily, while a deep crimson tint passed over her cheek, a blush, which seemed to me to confirm substantially the tenor of that language in which, while delirious, she had so constantly indulged. It did not lessen the seeming shame and dislike which her countenance appeared at once to embody, that a soft sweet smile was upon her lips at the same moment, and she extended to me her hand with an air of confidence which staggered and surprised me.

"What is the matter, dear husband? And you here, mother? Have I been sick? Can it be?"

"Hush!" said the mother. "You have been sick ever since the night of my marriage."

"Ah!" she exclaimed with an air of anxiety and pain, while pressing her hand upon her eyes, "Ah! that night!"

A shudder shook her frame as she uttered this simple and short sentence. Simple and short as it was, it seemed to possess a strange signification. That it was associated in her mind with some circumstances of peculiar import, was sufficiently obvious. What were these circumstances? Ah! that question! I ran over in my thought, in a single instant, all that

array of events, on that fatal night, which could, by any possibility, distress me, and confirm my suspicions. That waltz with Edgerton—that long conference between them—that lonely ride together from the home of Mrs. Delaney, in a close carriage—and the subsequent disaster—her unconscious ravings, and the strong, strange language which she employed, clearly full of meaning as it was, but in which I could discover one meaning only! all these topics of doubt and agitation passed through my brain in consecutive order, and with a compact arrangement which seemed as conclusive as any final issue. I said nothing; but what I might have said, was written in my face. Julia regarded me with a gaze of painful anxiety. What she read in my looks must have been troublously impressive. Her cheeks grew paler as she looked. Her eyes wandered from me vacantly, and I could see her thin soft lips quivering faintly like rose-leaves which an envious breeze has half separated from the parent-flower. Mrs. Delaney watched our mutual faces, and I left the room to avoid her scrutiny. I only re-entered it with the physician. He administered medicine to my wife.

"She will do very well now, I think," he said to me when leaving the house; "but she requires to be treated very tenderly. All causes of excitement must be kept from her. She needs soothing, great care, watchful anxiety. Clifford, above all, you should leave her as little as possible. This old woman, her mother, is no fit companion for her—scarcely a pleasant one. I do not mean to reproach you; ascribe what I say to a real desire to serve and make you happy; but let me tell you that Mrs. Delaney has intimated to me that you neglect your wife, that you leave her very much at night: and she further intimates, what I feel assured can not well be the case, that you have fallen into other and much more evil habits."

"The hag!"

"She is all that, and loves you no better now than before. Still, it is well to deprive such people of their scandal-mongering, of the meat for it at least. I trust, Clifford, for your own sake, that you were absent of necessity on Wednesday night."

"It will be enough for me to think so, sir," was my reply.

"Surely, if you *do* think so; but I am too old a man, and too old a friend of your own and wife's family, to justify you in taking exception to what I say. I hope you do not neglect this dear child, for she is one too sweet, too good, too gentle, Clifford, to be subjected to hard usage and neglect. I think her one of earth's angels—a meek creature, who would never think or do wrong, but would rather suffer than complain. I sincerely hope, for your own sake, as well as hers, that you truly estimate her worth."

I could not answer the good old man, though I was angry with him. My conscience deprived me of the just power to give utterance to my anger. I was silent, and he forbore any further reference to the subject. Shortly after he took his leave, and I re-ascended the stairs. Wearing slippers, I made little noise, and at the door of my wife's chamber I caught a sentence from the lips of Mrs. Delaney, which made me forget everything that the doctor had been saying.

"But Julia, there must have been some accident—something must have happened. Did your foot slip? perhaps, in getting out of the carriage, or in going up stairs, or——. There must have been something to frighten you, or hurt you. What was it?"

I paused; my heart rose like a swelling, struggling mass in the gorge of my throat. I listened for the reply. A deep sigh followed; and then I heard a reluctant, faint utterance of the single word, "Nothing!"

"Nothing?" repeated the old lady. "Surely, Julia, there was something. Recollect yourself. You know you rode home with Mr. Edgerton. It was past one o'clock——"

"No more—no more, mother. There was nothing—nothing that I recollect. I know nothing of what happened. Hardly know where I am now."

I felt a momentary pang that I had lingered at the entrance. Besides, there was no possibility that she would have revealed anything to the inquisitive old woman. Perhaps, had this been probable, I should not have felt the scruple and the pang. The very questions of Mrs. Delaney were as fully productive of evil in my mind, as if Julia had answered decisively on every topic. I entered the room, and Mrs. Delaney, after some little

lingering, took her departure, with a promise to return again soon. I paced the chamber with eyes bent upon the floor.

"Come to me, Edward—come sit beside me." Such were the gentle words of entreaty which my wife addressed to me. Gentle words, and so spoken—so sweetly, so frankly, as if from the very sacredest chamber of her heart. Could it be that guilt also harbored in that very heart—that it was the language of cunning on her lips—the cunning of the serpent? Ah! how can we think that with serpent-like cunning, there should be dove-like guilelessness? My soul revolted at the idea. The sounds of the poor girl's voice sounded like hissing in my ears. I sat beside her as she requested, and almost started, as I felt her fingers playing with the hair upon my temples.

"You are cold to me, dear husband; ah! be not cold. I have narrowly escaped from death. So they tell me—so I feel! Be not cold to me. Let me not think that I am burdensome to you."

"Why should you think so, Julia?"

"Ah! your words answer your question, and speak for me. They are so few—they have no warmth in them; and then, you leave me so much, dear husband—why, why do you leave me?"

"You do not miss me much, Julia."

"Do I not! ah! you do me wrong. I miss nothing else but you. I have all that I had when we were first married—all but my husband!"

"Do not deceive yourself, Julia; these fine speeches do not deceive me. I am afraid that the love of woman is a very light thing. It yields readily to the wind. It does not keep in one direction long, any more than the vane on the house-top."

"You do *not* think so, Edward. Such is not *my* love. Alas! I know not how to make it known to you, husband, if it be not already known; and yet it seems to me that you do not know it, or, if you do, that you do not care much about it. You seem to care very little whether I love you or not."

I exclaimed bitterly, and with the energy of deep feeling.

"Care little! *I* care little whether you love me or no! Psha! Julia, you must think me a fool!"

It did seem to me a sort of mockery, knowing my feelings as *I* did—knowing that all my folly and suffering came from the very intensity of my passion—that I should be reproached, by its object, with indifference! I forgot, that, as a cover for my suspicion, I had been striving with all the industry of art to put on the appearance of indifference. I did not give myself sufficient credit for the degree of success with which I had labored, or I might have suddenly arrived at the gratifying conclusion, that, while I was impressed and suffering with the pangs of jealousy, my wife was trembling with fear that she had for ever lost my affections. My language, the natural utterance of my real feelings, was not true to the character I had assumed. It filled the countenance of the suffering woman with consternation. She shrunk from me in terror. Her hand was withdrawn from my neck, as she tremulously replied:—

"Oh, do not speak to me in such tones. Do not look so harshly upon me. What have I done?"

"Ay! ay!" I muttered, turning away.

She caught my hand.

"Do not go—do not leave me, and with such a look! Oh! husband, I may not live long. I feel that I have had a very narrow escape within these few days past. Do not kill me with cruel looks; with words, that, if cruel from you, would sooner kill than the knife in savage hands. Oh! tell me in what have I offended? What is it you think? For what am I to blame? What do you doubt—suspect?"

These questions were asked hurriedly, apprehensively, with a look of vague terror, her cheeks whitening as she spoke. her eyes darting wildly into mine, and her lips remaining parted after she had spoken.

"Ah!" I exclaimed, keenly watching her. Her glance sunk beneath my gaze. I put my hand upon her own.

"What do I suspect? What should I suspect? Ha!"—Here I arrested myself. My ardent anxiety to know the truth, led me to forget my caution; to exhibit a degree of eagerness, which might have proved that I did suspect and seriously. To exhibit the possession of jealousy was to place her upon her guard—such was the suggestion of that miserable policy by which I had been governed—and defeat the impression of that

feeling of perfect security and indifference, which I had been so long striving to awaken. I recovered myself, with this thought, in season to re-assume this appearance.

"Your mind still wanders, Julia. What should I suspect? and whom? You do not suppose me to be of a suspicious nature, do you?"

"Not altogether—not always—no! But, of course, there is nothing to suspect. I do not know what I say. I believe I do wander."

This reply was also spoken hurriedly, but with an obvious effort at composure. The eagerness with which she seized upon my words, insisting upon the absence of any cause of suspicion, and ascribing to her late delirium, the tacit admissions which her look and language had made, I need not say, contributed to strengthen my suspicions, and to confirm all the previous conjectures of my jealous spirit.

"Be quiet," I said with an air of *sang froid*. "Do not worry yourself in this manner. You need sleep. Try for it, while I leave you."

"Do not leave me; sit beside me, dear Edward. I will sleep so much better when you are beside me."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, believe me. Ah! that I could always keep you beside me!"

"What! you are for a new honeymoon?" I said this in *a tone* of merriment, which Heaven knows, I little felt.

"Do not speak of it so lightly, Edward. It is too serious a matter. Ah! that you would always remain with me; that you would never leave me."

"Pshaw! What sickly tenderness is this! Why, how could I earn my bread or yours?"

"I do not mean that you should neglect your business, but that when business is over, you should give me all your time as you used to. Remember, how pleasantly we passed the evenings after our marriage. Ah! how could you forget?"

"I do not, Julia."

"But you do not care for them. We spend no such evenings now!"

"No! but it is no fault of mine!" I said gloomily; then, in-

terrupting her answer, as if dreading that she might utter some simple but true remark, which might refute the interpretation which my words conveyed, that the fault was hers, I enjoined silence upon her.

"You scarcely speak in your right mind yet, Julia. Be quiet, therefore, and try to sleep."

"Well, if you will sit beside me."

"I will do so, since you wish for it; but where's the need?"

"Ah! do not ask the need, if you still love me," was all she said, and looked at me with such eyes — so tearful, bright, so sad, soliciting — that, though I did not less doubt, I could no longer deny. I resumed the seat beside her. She again placed her fingers in my hair, and in a little while sunk into a profound slumber, only broken by an occasional sob, which subsided into a sigh.

Were she guilty — such was the momentary suggestion of the good angel — could she sleep thus? — thus quietly, confidingly, beside the man she had wronged — her fingers still paddling in his hair — her sleeping eyes still turning in the direction of his face?

To the clear, open mind, the suggestion would have had the force of a conclusive argument; but mine was no longer a clear, open mind. I had the disease of the blind heart upon me, and all things came out upon my vision as through a glass, darkly. The evil one at my elbow jeered when the good angel spoke.

"Fool! does she not see that she can blind you still!" Then, in the vanity and vexation of my spirit, I mused upon it further, and said to myself: — "Ay, but she will find, ere many days, that I am no longer to be blinded!" The scales were never thicker upon my sight than when I boasted in this foolish wise.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A FATHER'S GRIEFS.

She continued to improve, but slowly. Her organization was always very delicate. Her frame was becoming thin, almost to meagreness; and this last disaster, whatever might be its cause, had contributed still more to weaken a constitution which education and nature had never prepared for much hard encounter. But, though I saw these proofs of feebleness—of a feebleness that might have occasioned reasonable apprehensions of premature decay, and possibly very rapid decline—there were little circumstances constantly occurring—looks shown, words spoken—which kept up the irritation of my soul, and prevented me from doing justice to her enfeebled condition. My sympathies were absorbed in my suspicions. My heart was the debateable land of self. The blind passion which enslaved it, I need scarce say, was of a nature so potent, that it could easily impregnate, with its own color, all the objects of its survey. Seen through the eyes of suspicion, there is no truth, no virtue; the smile is that of the snake; the tear, that of the crocodile; the assurance, that of the traitor. There is no act, look, word, of the suspected object, however innocent, which, to the diseased mind of jealousy, does not suggest conjectures and arguments, all conclusive or confirmatory of its doubts and fears. It is not necessary to say that I shrunk from Julia's endearment, requited her smiles with indifference; and, though I did not avoid her presence—I could not, in the few days when her case was doubtful—yet exhibited, in all respects, the conduct of one who was in a sort of Coventry.

But one fact may be stated—one of many—which seemed to

give a sanction to my suspicions, will help to justify my course, and which, at the time, was terribly conclusive, to my reason, of the things which I feared. She spoke audibly the name of Edgerton, twice, thrice, while she slept beside me, in tones very faint, it is true, but still distinct enough. The faintness of her utterance, gave the tones an emphasis of tenderness which perhaps was unintended. Twice, thrice, that fatal name; and then, what a sigh from the full volume of a surcharged heart. Let any one conceive my situation—with my feelings, intense on all subjects—my suspicions already so thoroughly awakened; and then fancy what they must have been on hearing that utterance; from the unguarded lips of slumber; from the wife lying beside him; and of the name of him on whom suspicion already rested. I hung over the sleeper, breathless, almost gasping, finally, in the effort to contain my breath—in the hope to hear something, however slight, which was to confirm finally, or finally end my doubts. I heard no more; but did more seem to be necessary? What jealous heart had not found this sufficiently conclusive? And that deep-drawn sigh, sobbing, as of a heart breaking with the deferred hope, and the dream of youth baffled at one sweeping, severing blow.

I rose. I could no longer subdue my emotions to the necessary degree of watchfulness. I trod the chamber till daylight. Then, I dressed myself and went out into the street. I had no distinct object. A vague persuasion only, that I must do something—that something must be done—that, in short, it was necessary to force this exhausting drama to its fit conclusion. Of course William Edgerton was my object. As yet, how to bring about the issue, was a problem which my mind was not prepared to solve. Whether I was to stab or shoot him; whether we were to go through the tedious processes of the duel; to undergo the fatigue of preliminaries, or to shorten them by sudden rencounter; these were topics which filled my thoughts confusedly; upon which I had no clear conviction; not because I did not attempt to fix upon a course, but from a sheer inability to think at all. My whole brain was on fire; a chaotic mass, such as rushes up from the unstopped vents of the volcano—fire, stones, and lava—but dense smoke enveloping the whole.

In this frame of mind I hurried through the streets. The shops were yet unopened. The sun was just about to rise. There was a humming sound, like that of distant waters murmuring along the shore, which filled my ears; but otherwise everything was silent. Sleep had not withdrawn with night from his stealthy watch upon the household. It seemed to me that I alone could not sleep. Even guilt—if my wife were really guilty—even guilt could sleep. I left her sleeping, and how sweetly! as if the dream which had made her sob and sigh, had been succeeded by others, that made all smiles again. I could not sleep, and yet, who, but a few months before, had been possessed of such fair prospects of peace and prosperity? Fortune held forth sufficient promise; fame—so far as fame can be accorded by a small community—had done something toward giving me an honorable repute; and love—had not love been seemingly as liberal and prompt as ever young passions could have desired? I was making money; I was getting reputation; the only woman whom I had ever loved or sought, was mine; and mine, too, in spite of opposition and discouragements which would have chilled the ardor of half the lovers in the world. And yet I was not happy. It takes so small an amount of annoyance to produce misery in the heart of self-esteem, when united with suspicion, that it was scarcely possible that I should be happy. Such a man has a taste for self-torture; as one troubled with an irritating humor, is never at rest, unless he is tearing the flesh into a sore; he may then rest as he may.

I took the way to my office. It was not often that I went thither before breakfast. But William Edgerton had been in the habit of doing so. He lived in the neighborhood, and his father had taught him this habit during the period when he was employed in studying the profession. It might be that I should find him there on the present occasion. Such was my notion. What farther thought I had I know not; but a vague suggestion that, in that quiet hour—there—without eye to see, or hand to interpose, I might drag from his heart the fearful secret—I might compel confession, take my vengeance, and rid myself finally of that cruel agony which was making me its miserable puppet. Crude, wild notions these, but very natural.

I turned the corner of the street. The window of my office was open. "He is then there," I muttered to myself; and my teeth clutched each other closely. I buttoned my coat. My heart was swelling. I looked around me, and up to the windows. The street was very silent—the grave not more so. I strode rapidly across, threw open the door of the office which stood ajar, and beheld, not the person whom I sought, but his venerable father.

The sight of that white-headed old man filled me with a sense of shame and degradation. What had he not done for me? How great his assistance, how kind his regards, how liberal his offices. He had rescued me from the bondage of poverty. He had put forth the hand of help, with a manly grasp of succor at the very moment when it was most needed; had helped to make me what I was; and, for all these, I had come to put to death his only son. A revulsion of feeling took place within my bosom. These thoughts were instantaneous—a sort of lightning-flash from the moral world of thought. I stood abashed; brought to my senses in an instant, and was scarcely able to conceal my discomfiture and confusion. I stood before him with the feeling, and must have worn the look, of a culprit. Fortunately, he did not perceive my confusion. Poor old man! Cares of his own—cares of a father, too completely occupied his mind, to suffer his senses to discharge their duties with freedom.

"I am glad to see you, Clifford, though I did not expect it. Young men of the present day are not apt to rise so early."

"I must confess, sir, it is not my habit."

"Better if it were. The present generation, it seems to me, may be considered more fortunate, in some respects, than the past, though they are scarcely wiser. They seem to me exempt from such necessities as encountered their fathers. Their tasks are fewer—their labor is lighter——"

"Are their cares the lighter in consequence?" I demanded.

"That is the question," he replied. "For myself, I think not. They grow gray the sooner. They have fewer tasks, but heavier troubles. They live better in some respects. They have luxuries which, in my day, youth were scarcely permitted to enjoy; and which, indeed, were not often enjoyed by age

But they have little peace:—and, look at the bankruptcies of our city. They are without number—they produce no shame—do not seem to affect the credit of the parties; and, certainly, in no respect diminish their expenditures. They live as if the present day were the last they had to live; and living thus, they must live dishonestly. It is inevitable. The moral sense is certainly in a much lower condition in our country, than I have ever known it. What can be the reason?"

"The facility of procuring money, perhaps. Money is the most dangerous of human possessions."

"There can be none other. Clifford!"

"Sir."

"I change the subject abruptly. Have you seen my son lately, Clifford?"

The question was solemnly, suddenly spoken. It staggered me. What could it mean? That there was a meaning in it—a deep meaning—was unquestionable. But of what nature? Did the venerable man suspect my secret—could he by any chance conjecture my purpose? It is one quality of a mind not exactly satisfied of the propriety of its proceedings, to be suspicious of all things and persons—to fancy that the consciousness which distresses itself, is also the consciousness of its neighbors. Hence the blush upon the cheek—the faltering accents—the tremulousness of limb, and feebleness of movement. For a moment after the old man spoke—troubled with this consciousness, I could not answer. But my self-esteem came to my relief—nay, it had sufficed to conceal my disquiet. My looks were subdued to a seeming calm—my voice was unbroken, while I answered:—

"I have seen him within a few days, sir—a few nights ago we were at Mrs. Delaney's party. But why the question, sir?—what troubles you?"

"Strange that you have not seen! Did you not remark the alteration in his appearance?"

"I must confess, sir, I did not; but, perhaps, I did not remark him closely among the crowd."

"He is altered—terribly altered, Clifford. It is very strange that you have not seen it. It is visible to myself—his mother—all the family, and some of its friends. We tremble for his

life. He is a mere skeleton — moves without life or animation, feebly — his cheeks are pale and thin, his lips white, and his eyes have an appearance which, beyond anything besides, distresses me — either lifelessly dull, or suddenly flushed up with an expression of wildness, which occurs so suddenly as to distress us with the worst apprehensions of his sanity."

"Indeed, sir!" I exclaimed with natural surprise.

"So it appears to us, his mother and myself, though, as it has escaped your eyes, I trust that we have exaggerated it. That we have not imagined all of it, however, we have other proofs to show. His manner is changed of late, and most of his habits. The change is only within the last six months; so suddenly made that it has been forced upon our sight. Once so frank, he is now reserved and shrinking to the last degree; speaks little; is reluctant to converse; and, I am compelled to believe, not only avoids my glance, but fears it."

"It is very strange that he should do so, sir. I can think of no reason why he should avoid *your* glance. Can you so? Have you any suspicions?"

"I have."

"Ha! have you indeed?"

The old man drew his chair closer to me, and, putting his hand on mine, with eyes in which the tears, big, slow-gathering, began to fill — trickling at length, one by one, through the venerable furrows of his cheeks- he replied in faltering accents:—

"A terrible suspicion, Clifford. I am afraid he drinks; that he frequents gambling-houses; that, in short, he is about to be lost to us, body and soul, for ever."

Deep and touching was the groan that followed from that old man's bosom. I hastened to relieve him.

"I am sure, sir, that you do your son great injustice. I cannot conceive it possible that he should have fallen into these habits."

"He is out nightly — late- -till near daylight. But two hours ago he returned home. Let me confess to you, Clifford, what I should be loath to confess to anybody else. I followed him last night. He took the path to the suburbs, and I kept him in sight almost till he reached your dwelling. Then I lost him

He moved too rapidly then for my old limbs, and disappeared among those groves of wild orange that fill your neighborhood. I searched them as closely as I could in the imperfect starlight, but could see nothing of him. I am told that there are gambling-houses, notorious enough, in the suburbs just beyond you. I fear that he found shelter in these—that he finds shelter in them nightly."

I scarcely breathed while listening to the unhappy father's narrative. There was one portion of it to which I need not refer the reader, as calculated to confirm my own previous convictions. I struggled with my feelings, however, in respect for his. I kept them down and spoke.

"In this one fact, Mr. Edgerton, I see nothing to alarm you. Your son may have been engaged far more innocently than you imagine. He is young—you know too well the practices of young men. As for the drinking he is perhaps the very last person whom I should suspect of excess. I have always thought his temperance unquestionable."

"Until recently, I should have had no fears myself. But connecting one fact with another—his absence all night, nightly—the stealthiness with which he departs from home after the family has retired—the stealthiness with which he returns just before day—his visible agitation when addressed—and, oh Clifford! worst of all signs, the shrinking of his eye beneath mine and his mother's—the fear to meet, and the effort to avoid us—these are the signs which most pain me, and excite my apprehensions. But look at his face and figure also. The haggard misery of the one, sign of sleeplessness and late watching—the attenuated feebleness of the other, showing the effects of some practices, no matter of what particular sort, which are undermining his constitution, and rapidly tending to destroy him. If you but look in his eye as I have done, marking its wildness, its wandering, its sensible expression of shame—you can hardly fail to think with me that something is morally wrong. He is guilty——"

"He is guilty!"

I echoed the words of the father, involuntarily. They struck the chord of conviction in my own soul, and seemed to me the language of a judgment.

"Ha! You know it, then?" cried the old man. "Speak! Tell me, Clifford—what is his folly? What is the particular guilt and shame into which he has fallen?"

I knew not that I had spoken until I heard these words. The agitation of the father was greatly increased. Truly, his sorrows were sad to look upon. I answered him:—

"I simply echoed your words, sir—I am ignorant, as I said before; and, indeed, I may venture, I think, with perfect safety, to assure you that gaming and drink have nothing to do with his appearance and deportment. I should rather suspect him of some improper—*some guilty connection*——"

I felt that, in the utterance of these words, I too had become excited. My voice did not rise, but I knew that it had acquired an intenseness which I as quickly endeavored to suppress. But the father had already beheld the expression in my face, and perhaps the sudden change in my tones grated harshly upon his ear. I could see that his looks became more eager and inquiring. I could note a greater degree of apprehension and anxiety in his eyes. I subdued myself, though not without some effort.

"William Edgerton may be erring, sir—that I do not deny, for I have seen too little of him of late to say anything of his proceedings; but I am very confident when I say that excess in liquor can not be a vice of his; and as for gaming, I should fancy that he was the last person in the world likely to be tempted to the indulgence of such a practice."

The father shook his head mournfully.

"Why this shame?—this fear? Besides, Clifford, what we know of our son makes us equally sure that women have nothing to do with his excesses. But these conjectures help us nothing. Clifford, I must look to you."

"What can I do for you, sir?"

"He is my son, my only son—the care of many sad, sleepless hours. It was his mother's hope that he would be our solace in the weary and the sad ones. You can not understand yet how much the parent lives in the child—how many of his hopes settle there. William has already disappointed us in our ambition. He will be nothing that we hoped him to be; but of this I complain not. But that he should become base, Clifford;

a night-prowler in the streets; a hanger-on of stews and gaming-houses; a brawler at an alehouse bar; a man to skulk through life and society; down-looking in his father's sight; despised in that of the community—oh! these are the cruel, the dreadful apprehensions!"

"But you know not that he is any of these."

"True; but there is something grievously wrong when the son dares not meet the eye of a parent with manly fearlessness; when he looks without joyance at the face of a mother, and shrinks from her endearments as if he felt that he deserved them not. William Edgerton is miserable; that is evident enough. Now, misery does not always imply guilt; but, in his case, what else should it imply! He has had no misfortunes. He is independent; he is beloved by his parents, and by his friends; he has had no denial of the affections; in short, there is no way of accounting for his conduct or appearance, but by the supposition that he has fallen into vicious habits. Whatever these habits are, they are killing him. He is a mere skeleton; his whole appearance is that of a man running a rapid course of dissipation which can only advance in shame, and terminate in death. Clifford, if I have ever served you in the hour of your need, serve me in this of mine. Save my son for me. Bring him back from his folly; restore him, if you can, to peace and purity. See him, will you not? Seek him out; see him; probe his secret; and tell me what can be done to rescue him before it be too late."

"Really, Mr. Edgerton, you confound me. What can I do?"

"I know not. Every thing, perhaps! I confess I can not counsel you. I can not even suggest how you should begin. You must judge for yourself. You must think and make your approaches according to your own judgment. Remember, that it is not in his behalf only. Think of the father, the mother! our hope, our all is at stake. I speak to you in the language of a child, Clifford. I am a child in this. This boy has been the apple of our eyes. It is our sight for which I seek your help. I know your good sense and sagacity. I know that you can trace out his secret when I should fail. My feelings would blind me to the truth. They might lead me to use language

which would drive him from me. I leave it all to you. I know not who else can do for me half so well in a matter of this sort. Will you undertake it?"

Could I refuse? This question was discussed in all its bearings, in a few lightning-like progresses of thought. I felt all its difficulties—anticipated the annoyances to which it would subject me, and the degree of self-forbearance which it would necessarily require; yet, when I looked on the noble old gentleman who sat beside me—his gray hairs, his pleading looks, the recollection of the deep debt of gratitude which I owed him—I put my hand in his; I could resist no longer.

"I will try!" was the brief answer which I made him.

"God bless, God speed you!" he exclaimed, squeezing my hand with a pressure that said everything, and we separated; he for his family, and I for that new task which I had undertaken. How different from my previous purpose! I was now to seek to save the person whom I had set forth that morning with the purpose (if I had any purpose) to destroy. What a volume made up of contradictions and inconsistencies, strangely bound together, is the moral world of man!

CHAPTER XXXV.

LOCATION OF "THE QUESTION."

But how to save him? How to approach him? How to keep down my own sense of wrong, my own feeling of misery, while representing the wishes and the feelings of that good old man—that venerable father? These were questions to afflict, to confound me! Still, I was committed; I must do what I had promised; undertake it at least; and the conviction that such a task was to be the severest trial of my manliness, was a conviction that necessarily helped to strengthen me to go through with it like a man.

What I had heard from Mr. Edgerton in relation to his son, though new, and somewhat surprising to myself, had not altered, in any respect, my impressions on the subject of his conduct toward, or with, my wife. Indeed, it rather served to confirm them. I could have told the old man, that, in losing all traces of his son in the neighborhood of my dwelling the night when he pursued him, he had the most conclusive proofs that he had gone to no gaming-houses. But where did he go? That was a question for myself. Had he entered my premises, and hidden himself amidst the foliage where I had myself so often harbored, while my object had been the secret inspection of my household? Could it be that he had loitered there during the last few nights of my wife's illness, in the vain hope of seeing me take my departure? This was the conclusion which I reached, and with it came the next thought that he would revisit the spot again that night. Ha! that thought! "Let him come!" I muttered to myself. "I will endeavor to be in readiness!"

But, surely, the father was grievously in error; his parental fear, alone, had certainly drawn the picture of his son's reduced and miserable condition. I had seen nothing of this. I had observed that he was shy, incommunicative—seeking to avoid me, as, according to their showing, he had striven to avoid his parents. So far our experience had been the same. But I had totally failed to perceive the marks of suffering or of sin which the vivid feelings of the father on this subject had insisted were so apparent. I had seen in Edgerton only the false friend, the traitor, stealing like a serpent to my bower, to beguile from my side the only object which made it dear to me. I could see in him only the exulting seducer, confident in his ability, artful in his endeavors, winning in his accomplishments, and striving, with practised industry of libertinism, in the prosecution of his cruel schemes. I could see the grace of his bearing, the ease of his manner, the symmetry of his person, the neatness of his costume, the superiority of his dancing, the insinuation of his address. I could see these only! That he looked miserable—that he was thin to meagreness, I had not seen.

Yet, even were it so, what could this prove, as the father had conclusively shown, but guilt. Poverty could not trouble him—he had never been an unrequited lover. He had gone along the stream of society, indifferent to the lures of beauty, and with a bark that had always appeared studiously to keep aloof from the shores or shoals of matrimony. If he was miserable, his misery could only come from misconduct, not from misfortune. It was a misery engendered by guilt, and what was that guilt? I *knew* that he did not drink; and was not his course in regard to Kingsley, as narrated by that person on the night when we went to the gaming-house together—was not that sufficient to show that he was no gamester, unless he happened to be one of the most bare faced of all canting hypocrites, which I could not believe him to be. What remained, but that my calculations were right? It was guilt that was sinking him, body and soul, so that his eye no longer dared to look upward—so that his ear shrunk from the sounds of those voices which, even in the language of kindness, were still speaking to him in the severest language of rebuke. And whom did that guilt concern more completely than myself?

Say that the father was to lose his son, his only son—what was my loss, what was my shame! and upon whom should the curse most fully and finally fall, if not upon the wrong-doer, though it so happened that the ruin of the guilty brought with it overthrow to the innocent scarcely less complete!

The extent of that guilt of Edgerton?

On this point all was a wilderness, vague, inconclusive, confused and crowded within my understanding. I believed that he had approached my wife with evil designs—I believed, without a doubt, that he had passed the boundaries of propriety in his intercourse with her; but I believed not that she had fallen! No! I had an instinctive confidence in her purity, that rendered it apparently impossible that she should lapse into the grossness of illicit love. What, then, was my fear? That she did love him, though, struggling with the tendency of her heart, she had not yielded in the struggle. I believed that his grace, beauty, and accomplishments—his persevering attention—his similar tastes—had succeeded in making an impression upon her soul which had effectually eradicated mine. I believed that his attentions were sweet to her—that she had not the strength to reject them; and, though she may have proved herself too virtuous to yield, she had not been sufficiently strong to repulse him with virtuous resentment.

That Edgerton had not succeeded, did not lessen *his* offence. The attempt was an indignity that demanded atonement—that justified punishment equally severe with that which should have followed a successful prosecution of his purpose. Women are by nature weak. They are not to be tempted. He who, knowing their weakness, attempts their overthrow by that medium, is equally cowardly and criminal. I could not doubt that he had made this attempt; but now it seemed necessary that I should suspend my indignation, in obedience with what appeared to be a paramount duty. A selfish reasoning now suggested compliance with this duty as a mean for procuring better intelligence than I already possessed. I need not say that the doubt was the pain in my bosom. I felt, in the words of the cold devil Iago, those "damned minutes" of him "who dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet strongly loves."

The shapeless character of my fears and suspicions did not

by any means lessen their force and volume. On the contrary it caused them to loom out through the hazy atmosphere of the imagination, assuming aspects more huge and terrible, in consequence of their very indistinctness; as the phantom shapes along the mountains of the Brocken, gathering and scowling in the morning or the evening twilight. To obtain more precise knowledge—to be able to subject to grasp and measure the uncertain phantoms which I feared—was, if not to reduce their proportions, at least to rid me of that excruciating suspense, in determining what to do, which was the natural result of my present ignorance.

With some painstaking, I was enabled to find and force an interview with Edgerton that very day. He made an effort to elude me—such an effort as he could make without allowing his object to be seen. But I was not to be baffled. Having once determined upon my course, I was a puritan in the inveteracy with which I persevered in it. But it required no small struggle to approach the criminal, and so utterly to subdue my own sense of wrong, my suspicions and my hostility, as to keep in sight no more than the wishes and fears of the father. I have already boasted of my strength in some respects, even while exposing my weaknesses in others. That I could persuade Edgerton and my wife, equally, of my indifference, even at the moment when I was most agonized by my doubts of their purity, is a sufficient proof that I possessed a certain sort of strength. It was a moral strength, too, which could conceal the pangs inflicted by the vulture, even when it was preying upon the vitals of the best affections and the dearest hopes of the heart. It was necessary that I should put all this strength in requisition, as well to do what was required by the father, as to pierce, with keen eye, and considerate question, to the secret soul of the witness. I must assume the blandest manner of our youthful friendship: I must say kind things, and say them with a certain frank unconsciousness. I must use the language of a good fellow—a sworn companion—who is anxious to do justice to my friend's father, and yet had no notion that my friend himself was doing the smallest thing to justify the unmeasured fears of the fond old man. Such was my cue at first. I am not so sure that I pursued it to the end; but of this hereafter.

My attention having been specially drawn to the personal appearance of William Edgerton, I was surprised, if not absolutely shocked, to see that the father had scarcely exaggerated the misery of his condition. He was the mere shadow of his former self. His limbs, only a year before, had been rounded even to plumpness. They were now sharp and angular. His skin was pale, his looks haggard; and that apprehensive shrinking of the eye, which had called forth the most keen expressions of fear and suspicion from the father's lips, was the prominent characteristic which commanded my attention during our brief interview. His eye, after the first encounter, no longer rose to mine. Keenly did I watch his face, though for an instant only. A sudden hectic flush mantled its paleness. I could perceive a nervous muscular movement about his mouth, and he slightly started when I spoke.

"Edgerton," I said, with tones of good-humored reproach, "there's no finding you now-a-days. You have the invisible cap. What do you do with yourself? As for law, that seems destined to be a mourner so far as you are concerned. She sits like a widow in her weeds. You have abandoned her: do you mean to abandon your friends also?"

He answered, with a faint attempt to smile:—

"No; I have been to see you often, but you are never at home."

"Ah! I did not hear of it. But if you really wished to see a husband who has survived the honeymoon, I suspect that home is about the last place where you should seek for him. Julia did the honors, I trust?"

His eye stole upward, met mine, and sunk once more upon the floor. He answered faintly:—

"Yes, but I have not seen her for some days."

"Not since Mother Delaney's party, I believe?"

The color came again into his cheeks, but instantly after was succeeded by a deadly paleness.

"What a bore these parties are! and such parties as those of Mrs. Delaney are particularly annoying to me. Why the d—l couldn't the old tabby halter her hobby without calling in her neighbors to witness the painful spectacle? You were there, I think?"

"Yes."

"I left early. I got heartily sick. You know I never like such places; and, as soon as they began dancing, I took advantage of the fuss and fiddle to steal off. It was unfortunate I did so, for Julia was taken sick, and has had a narrow chance for it. I thought I should have lost her."

All this was spoken in tones of the coolest imaginable indifference. Edgerton was evidently surprised. He looked up with some curiosity in his glance, and more confidence; and, with accents that slightly faltered, he asked:—

"Is she well again? I trust she is better now."

"Yes!" I answered, with the same *sang-froid.* "But I've had a serious business of watching through the last three nights. Her peril was extreme. She lost her little one."

A visible shudder went through his frame.

"Tired to death of the walls of the house, which seems a dungeon to me, I dashed out this morning, at daylight, as soon as I found I could safely leave her; and, strolling down to the office, who should I find there but your father, perched at the desk, and seemingly inclined to resume all his former practice?"

"Indeed! my father—so early? What could be the matter? Did he tell you?"

"Yes, i'faith, he is in tribulation about you. He fancies you are in a fair way to destruction. You can't conceive what he fancies. It seems, according to his account, that you are a night-stalker. He dwells at large upon your nightly absences from home, and then about your appearance, which, to say truth, is very wretched. You scarcely look like the same man, Edgerton. Have you been sick? What's the matter with you?"

"I am *not* altogether well," he said, evasively.

"Yes, but mere indisposition would never produce such a change, in so short a period, in any man! Your father is disposed to ascribe it to other causes."

"Ah! what does he think?"

I fancied there was mingled curiosity and trepidation in this inquiry.

"He suspects you of gaming and drinking; but I assured him, very confidently, that such was not the case. On one of

these heads I could speak confidently, for I met Kingsley the other night — the night of Mother Delaney's party — who was hot and heavy against you because you refused to lend him money for such purposes. I was more indulgent, lent him the money, went with him to the house, and returned home with a pocket full of specie, sufficient to set up a small banking-operation of my own."

"You! can it be possible?"

"True; and no such dull way of spending an evening either. I got home in the small hours, and found Julia delirious. I haven't had such a fright for a stolen pleasure, Heaven knows when. There was the doctor, and there my eternal mother-in-law, and my poor little wife as near the grave as could be! But the circumstance of refusing the money to Kingsley, knowing his object, made me confident that gaming was not the cause of your night-stalking, and so I told the old gentleman."

"And what did he say?"

"Shook his head mournfully, and reasoned in this manner: 'He has no pecuniary necessities, has no oppressive toils, and has never had any disappointment of heart. There is nothing to make him behave so, and look so, but guilt — GUILT!'"

I repeated the last word with an entire change in the tone of my voice. Light, lively, and playful before, I spoke that single word with a stern solemnity, and, bending toward him, my eye keenly traversed the mazes of his countenance.

"*He has it!*" I thought to myself, as his head drooped forward, and his whole frame shuddered momentarily.

"But" — here my tones again became lively and playful — I even laughed — "I told the old man that I fancied I could hit the nail more certainly on the head. In short, I said I could pretty positively say what was the cause of your conduct and condition."

"Ah!" and, as he uttered this monosyllable, he made a feeble effort to rise from his seat, but sunk back, and again fixed his eye upon the floor in visible emotion.

"Yes! I told him — was I not right? — that a woman was at the bottom of it all!"

He started to his feet. His face was averted from me.

"Ha! was I not right? I knew it! I saw through it from

the first; and, though I did not tell the old man *that*, I was pretty sure that you were trespassing upon your neighbor's grounds. Ha! what say you? Was I not right? Were you not stealing to forbidden places—playing the snake, on a small scale, in some blind man's Eden? Ha! ha! what say you to that? I am right, am I not? eh?"

I clapped him on the shoulder as I spoke. His face had been half averted from me while I was speaking; but now it turned upon me, and his glance met mine, teeming with inquisitive horror.

"No! no! you are not right!" he faltered out; "it is not so. Nothing is the matter with me! I am quite well—quite! I will see my father, and set him right."

"Do so," I said, coolly and indifferently—"do so; tell him what you please: but you can't change my conviction that you're after some pretty woman, and probably poaching on some neighbor's territory. Come, make me your confidante, Edgerton. Let us know the history of your misfortune. Is the lady pliant? I should judge so, since you continue to spend so many nights away from home. Come, make a clean breast of it. Out with your secret! I have always been your friend. *We could not betray each other, I think!*"

"You are quite mistaken," he said, with the effort of one who is half strangled. "There is nothing in it; I assure you, you were never more mistaken."

"Pshaw, Edgerton! you may blind papa, but you can not blind me. Keep your secret, if you please, but, if you provoke me, I will trace it out; I will unkennel you. If I do not show the sitting hare in a fortnight, by the course of the hunter, tell me I am none myself."

His consternation increased, but I did not allow it to disarm me. I probed him keenly, and in such a manner as to make him wince with apprehension at every word which I uttered. Morally, William Edgerton was a brave man. Guilt alone made him a coward. It actually gave me pain, after a while, to behold his wretched imbecility. He hung upon my utterance with the trembling suspense of one whose eye has become enchained with the fascinating gaze of the serpent. I put my questions and comments home to him, on the assumption that

he was playing the traitor with another's wife; though taking care, all the while, that my manner should be that of one who has no sort of apprehensions on his own score. My deportment and tone tallied well with the practised indifference which had distinguished my previous overt conduct. It deceived him on that head; but the truth, like a sharp knife, was no less keen in penetrating to his soul; and, preserving my coolness and directness, with that singular tenacity of purpose which I could maintain in spite of my own sufferings—and keep them still unsuspected—I did not scruple to impel the sharp iron into every sensitive place within his bosom.

He writhed visibly before me. His struggles did not please me, but I sought to produce them simply because they seemed so many proofs confirming the truth of my conjectures. The fiend in my own soul kept whispering, "He has it!"—and a fatal spell, not unlike that which riveted his attention to the language which tore and vexed him, urged me to continue it until at length the sting became too keen for his endurance. In very desperation, he broke away from the fetters of that fascination of terror which had held him for one mortal hour to the spot

"No more! no more!" he exclaimed, with an uncontrollable burst of emotion. "You torture me! I can stand it no longer! There is nothing in your conjecture! There is no reason for your suspicions! She is—"

"She? Ah!"

I could not suppress the involuntary exclamation. The truth seemed to be at hand. I was premature. My utterance brought him to his senses. He stopped, looked at me wildly for an instant, his eyes dilated almost to bursting. He seemed suddenly to be conscious that the secrets of his soul—its dark, uncommissioned secrets—were about to force themselves into sight and speech; and unable, perhaps, to arrest them in any other way he darted headlong from my presence.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MEDITATED EXILE.

With his departure sunk the spirit which had sustained me. I had not gone through that scene willingly; I had suffered quite as many pangs as himself. I had made my own misery, though disguised under the supposed condition of another, the subject of my own mockery; and if I succeeded in driving the iron into *his* soul, the other end of the shaft was all the while working in mine! His flight was an equal relief to both of us. The stern spirit left me from that moment. My agony found relief, momentary though it was, in a sudden gush of tears. My hot, heavy head sank upon my palms, and I groaned in unreserved homage to the never-slumbering genius of pain—that genius which alone is universal—which adopts us from the cradle—which distinguishes our birth by our tears, hallows the sentiment of grief to us from the beginning, and maintains the fountains which supply its sorrows to the end. The lamb skips, the calf leaps, the fawn bounds, the bird chirps, the young colt frisks; all things but man enjoy life from its very dawn. He alone is feeble, suffering. His superior pangs and sorrows are the first proofs of his singular and superior destiny.

Bitter was the gush of tears that rolled from the surcharged fountains of my heart; bitter, but free—flowing to my relief, at the moment when my head seemed likely to burst with a volcanic volume within it, and when a blistering arrow seemed slowly to traverse, to and fro, the most sore and shrinking passages of my soul. Had not Edgerton fled, I could not have sustained it much longer. My passions would have hurled aside my judgment, and mocked that small policy under which

I acted. I felt that they were about to speak, and rejoiced that he fled. Had he remained, I should most probably have poured forth all my suspicion, all my hate; dragged by violence from his lips the confession of his wrong, and from his heart the last atonement for it.

At first I reproached myself that I had not done so. I accused myself of tameness—the dishonorable tameness of submitting to indignity—the last of all indignities—and of conferring calmly, even good-humoredly, with the wrong-doer. But cooler moments came. A brief interval sufficed—helped by the flood of tears which rushed, hot and scalding, from my eyes—to subdue the angry spirit. I remembered my pledges to the father; my unspeakable obligations to him; and when I again recollected that my convictions had not assailed the purity of my wife, and, at most, had questioned her affections only, my forbearance seemed justified.

But could the matter rest where it was? Impossible! What was to be done? It was clear enough that the only thing that could be done, for the relief of all parties, was to be done by myself. Edgerton was suffering from a guilty pursuit. That pursuit, if still urged, might be successful, if not so at present. The constant drip of the water will wear away the stone; and if my wife could submit to impertinent advances without declaring them to her husband, the work of seduction was already half done. To listen is, in half the number of cases, to fall. I must save her; I had not the courage to put her from me. Believing that she was still safe, I resolved, through the excess of that love which was yet the predominant passion in my soul, in spite of all its contradictions, to keep her so, if human wit could avail, and human energy carry its desires into successful completion.

To do this, there was but one process. That was flight. I must leave this city—this country. By doing so, I remove my wife from temptation, remove the temptation from the unhappy young man whom it is destroying; and thus, though by a sacrifice of my own comforts and interests, repay the debt of gratitude to my benefactor in the only effective manner. It called for no small exercise of moral courage and forbearance—no small benevolence—to come to this conclusion. It must be

understood that my professional business was becoming particularly profitable. I was rising in my profession. My clients daily increased in number; my acquaintance daily increased in value. Besides, I loved my birthplace—thrice-hallowed—the only region in my eyes—

"The spot most worthy loving
Of all beneath the sky."

But the sacrifice was to be made; and my imagination immediately grew active for my compensation, by describing a woodland home—a spot, remote from the crowd, where I should carry my household gods, and set them up for my exclusive and uninvaded worship. The whole world-wide West was open to me. A virgin land, rich in natural wealth and splendor, it held forth the prospect of a fair field and no favor to every newcomer. There it is not possible to keep in thraldom the fearless heart and the active intellect. There, no petty circle of society can fetter the energies or enfeeble the endeavors. No mocking, stale conventionalities can usurp the place of natural laws, and put genius and talent into the accursed strait-jacket of routine! Thither will I go. I remembered the late conference with my friend Kingsley, and the whole course of my reasoning on the subject of my removal was despatched in half an hour. "I will go to Alabama."

Such was my resolution. I was the man to make sudden resolutions. This, however, reasoned upon with the utmost circumspection, seemed the very best that I could make. My wife, yet pure, was rescued from the danger that threatened her; I was saved the necessity of taking a life so dear to my benefactor; and the unhappy young man himself—the victim to a blind passion—having no longer in his sight the temptation which misled him, would be left free to return to better thoughts, and the accustomed habits of business and society. I had concluded upon my course in the brief interval which followed my interview with William Edgerton and my return home.

The next day I saw his father. I communicated the assurance of the son, and renewed my own, that neither drunkenness nor gaming was his vice. What it was that afflicted him

I did not pretend to know, but I ascribed it to want of employment; a morbid, unenergetic temperament; the fact that he was independent, and had no rough necessities to make him estimate the true nature and the objects of life; and, at the close, quietly suggested that possibly there was some affair of the heart which contributed also to his suffering. I did not deny that his looks were wretched, but I stoutly assured the old man that his parental fears exaggerated their wretchedness. We had much other talk on the subject. When we were about to separate for the day, I declared my own determination in this manner:—

"I have just decided on a step, Mr. Edgerton, which perhaps will somewhat contribute to the improvement of your son, by imposing some additional tasks upon him. I am about to emigrate for the southwest."

"You, Clifford? Impossible! What puts that into your head?"

It was something difficult to furnish any good reason for such a movement. The only obvious reason spoke loudly for my remaining where I was.

"This is unaccountable," said he. "You are doing here as few young men have done before you. Your business increasing—your income already good—surely, Clifford, you have not thought upon the matter—you are not resolved."

I could plead little other than a truant disposition for my proceeding, but I soon convinced him that I was resolved. He seemed very much troubled; betrayed the most flattering concern in my interests; and, renewing his argument for my stay, renewed also his warmest professions of service."

"I had hoped," he said, "to have seen you and William, closely united, pursuing the one path equally and successfully together. I shall have no hopes of him if you leave us."

"The probability is, sir, that he will do better with the whole responsibility of the office thrown upon him."

"No! no!" said the old man, mournfully. "I have no hope of him. There seems to me a curse upon wealth always—that follows and clings to it, and never leaves it, till it works out the ruin of all the proprietors. See the number of our young men, springing from nothing, that make everything out of it—rise to eminence and power—get fortune as if it were a mere sport to

command and to secure it; while, on the other hand, look at the heirs of our proud families. Profligate, reckless, abandoned; as if, reasoning from the supposed wealth of their parents, they fancied that there were no responsibilities of their own. I saw this danger from the beginning. I have striven to train up my son in the paths of duty and constant employment; and yet—but complaint is idle. The consciousness of having tried my best to have and make it otherwise is, nevertheless, a consolation. When do you think to go?"

"In a week or two at farthest. I have but to rid myself of my impediments."

"Always prompt; but it is best. Once resolved, action is the moral law. Still, I wish I could delay you. I still think you are committing a great error. I can not understand it. You have established yourself. This is not easy anywhere. You will find it difficult in a new country, and among strangers."

"Nay, sir, more easy there than anywhere else. If a man has anything in him, strangers and a new country are the proper influences to bring it out. Friends and an old community keep it down, suppress, strangle it. This is the misfortune of your son. He has family, friends—resources which defeat all the operations of moral courage, and prevent independence. Necessity is the moral lever. Do you forget the saying of one of the wise men? 'If you wish your son to become a man, strip him naked and send him among strangers'—in other words, throw him upon his own resources, and let him take care of himself. The not doing this is the source of that misfortune which only now you deplored as so commonly following the condition of the select and wealthy. I do not fear the struggle in a new country. It will end in my gaining my level, be that high or low. Nothing, in such a region, can keep a man from that."

"Ay, but the roughness of those new countries—the absence of refinement—the absolute want of polish and delicacy."

"The roughness will not offend me, if it is manly. The world is full of it. To be anything, a man must not have too nice a stomach. Such a stomach will make him recoil from sights of misery and misfortune; and he who recoils from such sights, will be the last to relieve, to repair them. But while I

admit the roughness and the want of polish among these frontier men, I deny the want of delicacy. Their habits are rude and simple, perhaps, but their tastes are pure and unaffected, and their hearts in the right place. They have strong affections; and strong affections, properly balanced, are the true sources of the better sort of delicacy. All other is merely conventional, and consists of forms and phrases, which are very apt to keep us from the thing itself which they are intended to represent. Give me these frank men and women of the frontier, while my own feelings are yet strong and earnest. Here, I am perpetually annoyed by the struggle to subdue within the social limits the expression of that nature which is for ever boiling up within me, and the utterance of which is neither more nor less than the heart's utterance of the faith and hope which are in it. We are told of those nice preachers who 'never mention hell to ears polite.' They are the preachers of your highly-refined, sentimental society. Whatever hell may be, they are the very teachers that, by their mincing forbearance, conduct the poor soul that relies on them into its jaws. It is a sort of lie not to use the properest language to express our thoughts, but rather so to falsify our thoughts by a sort of lack-a-daisaical phraseology which deprives them of all their virility. A nation or community is in a bad way for truth, when there is a tacit understanding among their members to deal in the diminutives of a language, and forbear the calling of things by their right names. An Englishman, wishing to designate something which is graceful, pleasing, delicate, or fine, uses the word 'nice' —more fitly applied to bon-bons or beefsteaks, according to the stomach of the speaker. An energetic form of speech is rated, in fashionable society, as particularly vulgar. In our larger American cities, where they have much pretension but little character, a leg must not be spoken of as such. You may say 'limb,' but not 'leg.' The word 'woman'—one of the sweetest in the language—is supposed to disparage the female to whom it is applied. She must be called a 'lady,' forsooth; and this word, originally intended to pacify an aristocratic vanity, has become the ordinary appellative of every member of that gross family which, in the language of Shakspere, is only fit to 'suckle fools and chronicle small beer.' I shall be more free, and feel

more honest in that rough world of the west; a region in which the dilettantism, such as it is, of our Atlantic cities, is always very prompt to sneer at and disparage; but I look to see the day, even in our time, when that west shall be, not merely an empire herself, but the nursing mother of great empires. There shall be a genius born in that vast, wide world—a rough, unlicked genius it may be, but one whose words shall fall upon the hills like thunder, and descend into the valleys like a settled, heavy rain, which shall irrigate them all with a new life. Perhaps—"

I need not pursue this. I throw it upon paper with no deliberation. It streams from me like the rest. Its tone was somewhat derived from those peculiar, sad feelings, and that pang-provoking course of thought, which it has been the purpose of this narrative to embody. In the expression of digressive but earnest notions like these, I could momentarily divert myself from deeper and more painful emotions. I had really gone through a great trial: I say a great trial—always assuming human indulgence for that disease of the blind heart which led me where I found myself, which makes me what I am. I did not feel lightly the pang of parting with my birthplace. I did not esteem lightly the sacrifice of business, comfort, and distinction which I was making; and of that greater cause of suffering, supposed or real, of the falling off in my wife's affection, the agony is already in part recorded. It may be permitted to me, perhaps, under these circumstances—with the additional knowledge, which I yet suppressed, that these sacrifices were to be made, and these sufferings endured, partly that the son might be saved—to speak with some unreserved warmth of tone to the venerable and worthy sire. He little knew how much of my determination to remove from my country was due to my regard for him. I felt assured that, if I remained, two things must happen. William Edgerton would persevere in his madness, and I should murder him in his perseverance! I banished myself in regard for that old man, and in some measure to requite his benefactions, that I might be spared this necessity.

When, the next day, I sought William Edgerton himself, and declared my novel determination, he turned pale as death. I could see that his lips quivered. I watched him closely. He

was evidently racked by an emotion which was more obvious from the necessity he was under of suppressing it. With considerable difficulty he ventured to ask my reasons for this strange step, and with averted countenance repeated those which his father had proffered against my doing so. I could see that he fain would have urged his suggestions more vehemently if he dared. But the conviction that his wishes were the fathers to his arguments was conclusive to render him careful that his expostulations should not put on a show of earnestness. I must do William Edgerton the justice to say that guilt was not his familiar. He could not play the part of the practised hypocrite. He had no powers of artifice. He could not wear the flowers upon his breast, having the volcano within it. Professionally, he could be no *roué*. He could seem no other than he was. Conscious of guilt, which he had not the moral strength to counteract and overthrow, he had not, at the same time, the art necessary for its concealment. He could use no smooth, subtle blandishments. His cheek and eye would tell the story of his mind, though it strove to make a false presentment. I do him the further justice to believe that a great part of his misery arose from this consciousness of his doing wrong, rather than from the difficulties in the way of his success. I believe that, even were he successful in the prosecution of his illicit purposes, he would not have looked or felt a jot less miserable. I felt, while we conferred together, that my departure was perhaps the best measure for his relief. While I mused upon his character and condition, my anger yielded in part to commiseration. I remembered the morning-time of our boyhood—when we stood up for conflict with our young enemies, side by side—obeyed the same rallying-cry, recognised the same objects, and were a sort of David and Jonathan to one another. Those days!—they soothed and softened me while I recalled them. My tone became less keen, my language less tinctured with sarcasm, when I thought of these things; and I thought of our separation without thinking of its cause.

"I leave you, Edgerton, with one regret—not that we part, for life is full of partings, and the strong mind must be reconciled with them, or it is nothing—but that I leave you so unlike your former self. I wish I could do something for you."

I gave him my hand as as I spoke. He did not grasp—he rather shrunk from it. An uncontrollable burst of feeling seemed suddenly to gush from him as he spoke:—

"Take no heed of me, Clifford—I am not worthy of *your* thought."

"Ha! What do you mean?"

He spoke hastily, in manifest discomfiture:—

"I am worthy of no man's thought."

"Pshaw! you are a hypochondriac."

"Would it were that!—But you go!—when?"

"In a week, perhaps."

"So soon? So very soon? Do you—do you carry your family with you at once?"

There was great effort to speak this significant inquiry. I perceived that. I perceived that his eyes were on the ground while it was made. The question was offensive to me. It had a strange and painful significance. It recalled the whole cause, the bitter cause of my resolve for exile; and I could not control the altered tones of my voice in answering, which I did with some causticity of feeling, which necessarily entered into my utterance.

"Family, surely! My wife only! No great charge, I'm thinking, and her health needs an early change. Would you have me leave *her?* I have no other family, you know!"

The dialogue, carried on with restraint before, was shortened by this; and, after a few business remarks, which were necessary to our office concerns, he pleaded an engagement to get away. He left me with some soreness upon my mind, which formed its expression in a brief soliloquy.

"You would have the path made even freer than before, would you? It does not content you, these long morning meditations—these pretended labors of the painting-room, the suspicious husband withdrawn, and the wife, neither scorning nor consenting, willing to believe in that devotion to the art which is properly a devotion to herself? These are not sufficient opportunities, eh? There were more room for landscape, if this Othello were in Alabama—pitching his stakes, and building his log-cabin for the reception of that divinity, that finds the worship very sufficient where she is! We shall dis

appoint you, Mr. Edgerton!—Ah! could I but know all! Could I be sure that she did love him! Could I be sure that she did not! That is the curse—that doubt!—Will it remain so? No! no! Once removed—once in those forest regions, it can not be that she will repine for anything. She *must* love me then—she will feel anew the first fond passion. She will forget these passing fancies. They *will* pass! She is young. The image will haunt her no longer—at least, it will no longer haunt me!"

So I spoke, but I was not so sure of that last. The doubt did not trouble me, however. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. But I had another test yet to try. I wished to see how Julia would receive the communication of my purpose. As yet she knew nothing of my contemplated departure. "It will surprise her," I thought to myself. "In that surprise she will show how much our removal will distress her!"

But when I made known to her my intention, the surprise was all my own. The communication did not seemed to distress her at all. Surprise her it did, but the surprise seemed a pleasant one. It spoke out in a sudden flashing of the eye, a gentle smiling of the mouth, which was equally unexpected and grateful to my heart.

"I am delighted with the idea!" she exclaimed, putting her arms about my neck. "I think we shall be so happy there. I long to get away from this place."

"Indeed! But are you serious?"

"To be sure."

"I was apprehensive it might distress you."

"Oh! no! no! I have been dull and tired here, for a long while; and I thought, when you told me that Mr. Kingsley had gone to Alabama, how delightful it would be if we could go too."

"But you never told me that."

"No."

"Nor even looked it, Julia."

"Surely not—I should have been loath to have you think, while your business was so prosperous, and you seemed so well satisfied here, that I had any discontent."

"I satisfied!" I said this rather to myself than her.

"Yes, were you not? I had no reason to think otherwise. Nay, I feared you were too well satisfied, for I have seen so little of you of late. I'm sure I wished we were anywhere, so that you could find your home more to your liking."

"And have such notions really filled your brain, Julia?"

"Really."

"And you have found me a stranger—you have missed me?"

"Ah! do you not know it, Edward?"

"You shall have no need to reproach me hereafter. We will go to Alabama, and live wholly for one another. I shall leave you in business time only, and hurry back as soon as I can."

"Ah, promise me that?"

"I do!"

"We shall be so happy then. Then we shall take our old rambles, Edward, though in new regions, and I will resume the pencil, if you wish it."

This was said timidly.

"To be sure I wish it. But why do you say 'resume'? Have you not been painting all along?"

"No! I have scarcely smeared canvass in the last two months."

"But you have been sketching?"

"No!"

"What employed you then in the studio? How have you passed your mornings?"

This inquiry was made abruptly, but it did not disturb her. Her answer was strangely satisfactory.

"I have scarcely looked in upon the studio in all that time."

I longed to ask what Edgerton had done with himself, and whether he had been suffered to employ himself alone, in his morning visits, but my tongue faltered—I somehow dared not. Still, it was something to have her assurance that she had not found her attractions in that apartment in which my jealous fancy had assumed that she took particular delight. She had spoken with the calmness of innocence, and I was too happy to believe her. I put my arms about her waist.

"Yes, we will renew the old habits, for I suppose that business there will be less pressing, less exacting, than I have found

it here. We will take our long walks, Julia, and make up for lost time in new sketches. You have thought me a truant, Julia —neglectful hitherto! Have you not?"

"Ah, Edward!"—Her eyes filled with tears, but a smile, like a rainbow, made them bright.

"Say, did you not?"

"Do not be angry with me if I confess I thought you very much altered in some respects. I was fearful I had vexed you."

"You shall have no more reason to fear. We shall be the babes in the wood together. I am sure we shall be quite happy, left to ourselves. No doubts, no fears—nothing but love. And you are really willing to go?"

"Willing! I wish it! I can get ready in a day."

"You have but a week. But, have you no reluctance? Is there nothing that you regret to leave? Speak freely, Julia. Your mother, your friends—would you not prefer to remain with them?"

She placed her hands on my shoulders, laid her head close to my bosom and murmured—how softly, how sweetly—in the touching language of the Scripture damsel.

"Entreat me not to leave thee, or to refrain from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God!"

I folded her with tremulous but deep joy in my embrace; and in that sweet moment of peace, I wondered that I ever should have questioned the faith of such a woman

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"AND STILL THE BITTER IN THE CUP OF JOY."

ONCE more I had sunshine. The clouds seemed to depart as suddenly as they had risen, and that same rejoicing and rosy light which had encircled the brow of manhood at its dawn long shrouded, seemingly lost for ever, and swallowed up in darkness — came out as softly and quietly in the maturer day, as if its sweet serene had never known even momentary obscuration.

Love, verily, is the purple light of youth. If it abides, blessing and blessed, with the unsophisticated heart, youth never leaves us. Gray brows make not age — the feeble step, the wrinkled visage, these indicate the progress of time, but not the passage of youth. Happy hearts keep us in perpetual spring, and the glow of childhood without its weaknesses is ours to the final limit of seventy. The sense of desolation, the pang of denial, the baffled hope, and the defrauded love, these constitute the only age that should ever give the heart a pang. I can fancy a good man advancing through all the mortal stages from seventeen to seventy-five, and crowned by the sympathies of corresponsive affections, simply going on from youth to youth, ending at last in youth's perfect immortality!

The hope of this — not so much a hope as an instinct — is the faith of our boyhood. The boy, as the father of the man, transmits this hope to riper years; but if the experience of the day correspond not with the promise of the dawn, how rapidly old age comes upon us! White hairs, lean cheeks, withered muscles, feeble steps, and that dull, dead feeling about the heart — that utter abandonment of cheer — which would be despair were it not for a certain blunted sensibility — a sort of drowsy

indifference to all things that the day brings forth, which, as it takes from life the excitement of every passion, leaves it free from the sting of any. Yet, were not the tempest better than the calm? Who would not prefer to be driven before the treacherous hurricane of the blue gulf, than to linger midway on its shoreless waters, and behold their growing stagnation from day to day? The apathy of the passions is the most terrible form in which age makes its approaches.

With an earnest, sanguine temperament, such as mine, there is little danger of such apathy, The danger is not from lethargy but madness. I had escaped this danger. It was surprising, even to myself, how suddenly my spirits had arisen from the pressure that had kept them down. In a moment, as it were, that mocking troop of fears and sorrows which environed me, took their departure. It seemed that it was only necessary for me to know that I was about to lose the presence of William Edgerton to find this relief.

And yet, how idle! With an intense *egoïsme*, such as mine, I should conjure up an Edgerton in the deepest valleys of our country. We have our gods and devils in our own hearts. The nature of the deities we worship depends upon our own. In a savage state, the Deity is savage, and expects bloody sacrifices; with the progress of civilization his attributes incline to mercy. The advent of Jesus Christ indicated the advance of the Hebrews to a higher sense of the human nature. It was the advent of the popular principle, which has been advancing steadily ever since and keeping due pace with the progress of Christian education. The people were rising at the expense of the despotism which had kept them down. It does not affect the truth of this to show that the polish of the Jewish nation was lessened at this period. Nay, rather proves it, since the diffusion of a truth or a power must always lessen its intensity. In teaching, for the first time, the doctrine of the soul's immortality, the Savior laid the foundation of popular rights, in the elevation of the common humanity—since he thus showed the equal importance, in the sight of God, of every soul that had ever taken shape beneath his hands.

The demon which had vexed and tortured me was a demon of my own soliciting—of my own creation. But, I knew not

this. I congratulated myself on escaping from him. Blind fancy!—I little knew the insidious pertinacity of this demon—this demon of the blind heart. I little knew the nature of his existence, and how much he drew his nutriment from the recesses of my own nature. He could spare, or seem to spare, the victim of whom he was so sure; and by a sort of levity, in no ways unaccountable, since we see it in the play of cat with mouse, could indulge with temporary liberty, the poor captive of whom he was at any moment certain. I congratulated myself on my escape; but I was not so well pleased with the congratulations of others. I was doomed to endure those of my exemplary mother-in-law, Mrs. Delaney. That woman had her devil—a worse devil, though not more troublesome, I think, than mine. She said to me, when she heard of my purpose of removal: "You are right to remove. It is only prudent. Pity you had not gone some months ago."

I read her meaning, where her language was ambiguous, in her sharp, leering eyes—full of significance—an expression of mysterious intelligence, which, mingled with a slight, sinister smile upon her lips, for a moment, brought a renewal of all my tortures and suspicions. She saw the annoyance which I felt, and strove to increase it. I know not—I will not repeat—the occasional innuendos which she allowed herself to utter in the brief space of a twenty minutes' interview. It is enough to say that nothing could be more evident than her desire to vex me with the worst pangs which a man can know, even though her success in the attempt was to be attained at the expense of her daughter's peace of mind and reputation. I do not believe that she ever hinted to another, what she clearly enough insinuated as a cause of fear to me. Her purpose was to goad me to madness, and in her witless malice, I do believe she was utterly unconscious of the evil that might accrue to the child of her own womb from her base and cruel suggestions. I wished to get from her these suggestions in a more distinct form. I wished at the same time, to deprive her of the pleasure of seeing that I understood her. I restrained myself accordingly, though the vulture was then again at my vitals.

"What do you mean, Mrs. Delaney? Why is it a pity that I hadn't gone months ago?"

"Oh! that's enough for me to know. I have my reasons."

"But, will you not suffer me to know them? I am conscious of no evil that has arisen from my not going sooner."

"Indeed! Well, if you are not, I can only say you're not so keen-sighted a lawyer as I thought you were. That's all."

"If you think I would have made out better, got more practice, and made more money in Alabama, that, I must tell you, has been long since my own opinion."

"No! I don't mean that—it has no regard to business and money-making—what I mean."

"Ah! what can it have regard to? You make me curious, Mrs. Delaney."

"Well, that may be; but I'm not going to satisfy your curiosity. I thought you had seen enough for yourself. I'm sure you're the only one that has not seen."

"Upon my soul, Mrs. Delaney, you are quite a mystery."

"Oh! am I?"

"I can't dive into such depths. I'm ignorant."

"Tell those that know you no better. But you can't blind me. I know that you know—and more than that, I can guess what's carrying you to Alabama. It's not law business, I know that."

I was vexed enough, as may be supposed, at this malicious pertinacity, but I kept down my struggling gorge with a resolution which I had been compelled often enough to exercise before; and quietly ended the interview by taking my hat and departure, as I said:—

"You are certainly a very sagacious lady, Mrs. Delaney; but I must leave you, and wait your own time to make these mysterious revelations. My respects to Mr. Delaney. Good morning."

"Oh, good morning; but let me tell you, Mr. Clifford, if you don't see, it's not because you can't. Other people can see without trying."

The Jezabel!

My preparations were soon completed. I worked with the spirit of enthusiasm—I had so many motives to be active; and, subordinate among these, but still important, I should get out of the reach of this very woman. I could not beat her myself,

but I wished her husband might do it, and not to anticipate my own story, he did so in less than three months after. He was the man too, to perform such a labor with unction and emphasis. A vigorous man with muscles like bolt-ropes, and limbs that would have been respectable in the days of Goliah. I met him on leaving the steps of Mrs. Delaney's lodgings, and—thinking of the marital office I wished him to perform—I was rejoiced to discover that he was generously drunk—in the proper spirit for such deeds in the flesh.

He seized my hand with quite a burst of enthusiasm, swore I was a likely fellow, and somehow he had a liking for me.

"Though, to be sure, my dear fellow, it's not Mrs. Delaney that loves any bone in your skin. She's a lady that, like most of the dear creatures, has a way of her own for thinking. She does her own thinking, and what can a woman know about such a business. It's to please her that I sit by and say nothing; and a wife must be permitted some indulgence while the moon lasts, which the poets tell us, is made out of honey: but it's never a long moon in these days, and a small cloud soon puts an end to it. Wait till that time, Mr. Clifford, and I'll put her into a way of thinking, that'll please you and myself much better."

I thanked him for his good opinion, and civilly wished him—as it was a matter which seemed to promise him so much satisfaction—that the duration of the honeymoon should be as short as possible. He thanked me affectionately—grasped my hand with the squeeze of a blacksmith, and entreated that I should go back and take a drink of punch with him. As an earnest of what he could give me, he pulled a handful of lemons from his pocket which he had bought from a shop by the way. I need not say I expressed my gratitude, though I declined his invitation. I then told him I was about to remove to Alabama, and he immediately proposed to go along with me. I reminded him that he was just married, and it would be expected of him that he would see the honeymoon out.

"Ah, faith!" he replied, "and there's sense in what you say; it must be done, I suppose; but devil a bit, to my thinking, does any moon last a month in this climate; and the first cloudy weather, d'ye see, and I'm after you."

It was difficult to escape from the generous embraces of my ardent father-in-law; and the whole street witnessed them.

That afternoon I spent in part with the Edgertons. I went soon after my own dinner and found the family at theirs. William Edgerton was present. The old man insisted that I should take a seat at the table and join them in a bottle of wine, which I did. It was a family, bearing apparently all the elements within itself of a happiness the most perfect and profound. Particularly an amiable family. Yet there was no insipidity. The father has already been made known; the son should be by this time; the mother was one of those strong-minded, simple women, whose mind may be expressed by its most striking characteristic—independence. She had that most obvious trait of aristocratic breeding, a quiet, indefinable, easy dignity—a seemingly natural quality, easy itself, that puts everybody at ease, and yet neither in itself nor in others suffered the slightest approach to be made to unbecoming familiarity. A sensible, gentlewoman—literally gentle—yet so calm, so firm, you would have supposed she had never known one emotion calculated to stir the sweet, glass-like placidity of her deportment.

And yet, amidst all this calm placidity, with an eye looking benevolence, and a considerateness that took note of your smallest want, she sustained the pangs of one yearning for her first born; dissatisfied and disappointed in his career, and apprehensive for his fate. The family was no longer happy. The worm was busy in all their hearts. They treated me kindly, but it was obvious that they were suffering. A visible constraint chilled and baffled conversation; and I could see the deepening anxieties which clouded the face of the mother, whenever her eye wandered in the direction of her son. This it did, in spite, I am convinced, of her endeavors to prevent it.

I, too, could now look in the same quarter. My feelings were less bitter than they were, and William Edgerton shared in the change. I did not the less believe him to have done wrong, but, in the renewed conviction of my wife's purity, I could forgive him, and almost think he was sufficiently punished in entertaining affections which were without hope. Punished he was, whether by hopelessness or guilt, and punished terribly. I

could see a difference for the worse in his appearance since I had last conferred with him. He was haggard and spiritless to the last degree. He had few words while we sat at table, and these were spoken only after great effort; and, regarding him now with less temper than before, it seemed to me that his parents had not exaggerated the estimate which they had formed of his miserable appearance. He looked very much like one, who had abandoned himself to nightly dissipation, and those excesses of mind and body, which sap from both the saving and elevating substance. I did not wonder that the old man ascribed his condition to the bottle and the gaming-table. But that I knew better, such would most probably have been my own conclusion.

The conversation was not general—confined chiefly to Mr. Edgerton the elder and myself. Mrs. Edgerton remained awhile after the cloth had been withdrawn, joining occasionally in what was said, and finally left us, though with still a lingering, and a last look toward her son, which clearly told where her heart was. William Edgerton followed her, after a brief interval, and I saw no more of him, though I remained for more than an hour. He had said but little. It was with some evident effort, that he had succeeded in uttering some general observation on the subject of the Alabama prairies—those beautiful "gardens of the desert,"

"For which the speech of England has no name."

My removal had been the leading topic of our discourse, and when I declared my intention to start on the very next day, and that the present was a farewell visit, the emotion of the son visibly increased. Soon after he left the room. When I was alone with the father, he took occasion to renew his offer of service, and, in such a manner, as to take from the offer its tone of service. He seemed rather to ask a favor than to suggest one. Money he could spare—the repayment should be at my own leisure—and my bond would be preferable, he was pleased to say, to that of any one he knew. I thanked him with becoming feelings, though, for the present, I declined his assistance. I pledged myself, however, should circumstances make it necessary for me to seek a loan, to turn, in the first instance, to him. He had been emphatically my friend—*the* friend, sole, singular

—never fluctuating in his regards, and never stopping to calculate the exact measure of my deserts. I felt that I could not too much forbear in reference to the son, having in view the generous friendship of the father.

That day, and the night which followed it, was a long period with me. I had to see many acquaintances, and attend to a thousand small matters. I was on my feet the whole day, and even when the night came I had no rest. I was in the city till near eleven o'clock. When I got home I found that my wife had done her share of the tasks. She had completed her preparations. Our luggage was all ready for removal. To her I had assigned the labor of packing up her pictures, her materials for painting, her clothes, and such other matters as she desired to carry with us, to our new place of abode. The rest was to be sold by a friend after our departure, and the proceeds remitted. I knew I should need them all. Most of our baggage was to be sent by water. We travelled in a private carriage, and consequently, could take little. Julia, unlike most women, was willing to believe with me that impediments are the true name for much luggage; and, with a most unfeminine habit, she could limit herself without reluctance to the merest necessities. We had no bandboxes, baskets, or extra bundles, to be stuffed here and there, filling holes and corners, and crowding every space, which should be yielded entirely to the limbs of the traveller. Though sensitive and delicate in a great degree, she had yet that masculine sense which teaches that, in the fewness of our wants lies our truest source of independence; and she could make herself ready for taking stage or steamboat in quite as short a time as myself.

Her day's work had exhausted her. She retired, and when I went up to the chamber, she already seemed to sleep. I could not. Fatigue, which had produced exhaustion, had baffled sleep. Extreme weariness becomes too much like a pain to yield readily to repose. The moment that exercise benumbs the frame, makes the limbs ache, the difficulty increases of securing slumber. I felt weary, but I was restless also. I felt that it would be vain for me to go to bed. Accordingly, I placed myself beside the window, and looked out meditatingly upon the broad lake which lay before our dwelling.

The night was very calm and beautiful. The waters from the lake were falling. Tide was going out, and the murmuring clack of a distant sawmill added a strange sweetness to the hour, and mingled harmoniously with the mysterious goings on of midnight. The starlight, not brilliant, was yet very soft and touching. Isolated and small clouds, like dismembered ravens' wings, flitted lightly along the edge of the western horizon, shooting out at intervals brief, brilliant flashes of lightning. There was a flickering breeze that played with the shrubbery beneath my window, making a slight stir that did not break the quiet of the scene, and gave a graceful movement to the slender stems as they waved to and fro beneath its pressure. A noble pride of India* rose directly before my eyes to the south—its branches stretching almost from within touch of the dwelling, over the fence of a neighbor. The whole scene was fairy-like. I should find it indescribable. It soothed my feelings. I had been the victim of a long and painful moral conflict. At length I had a glimmering of repose. Events, in the last few days—small events which, in themselves denoted nothing—had yet spoken peace to my feelings. My heart was in that dreamy state of languor, such as the body enjoys under the gradually growing power of the anodyne, in which the breath of the summer wind brings a language of luxury, and the most imperfect sights and sounds in nature minister to a capacity of enjoyment, which is not the less intoxicating and sweet because it is subdued. I mused upon my own heart, upon the heart which I so much loved and had so much distrusted—upon life, its strange visions, delusive hopes, and the sweet efficacy of mere shadows in promoting one's happiness at last. Then came, by natural degrees, the thought of that strange mysterious union of light and darkness—life and death—the shadows that we are; the substances that we are yet to be. The future!—still it rose before me—but the darkness upon it alone showed me it was there. It did not offend me, however, for my heart was glowing in a present starlight. It was the hour of hopes rather than of fears; and in the mere

* China tree; the melia azedaracha of botanists. A tree peculiar to the south, of singular beauty, and held in high esteem as a shade-tree.

prospect of transition to the new—such is the elastic nature of youth—I had agreed to forget every pang whether of idea or fact, which had vexed and tortured me in the perished past. My musings were all tender yet joyful—they partook of that "joy of grief" of which the bard of Fingal tells us. I felt a big tear gathering in my eye, I knew not wherefore. I felt my heart growing feeble, with the same delight which one would feel at suddenly recovering a great treasure which had been supposed for ever lost. I fancied that I had recovered my treasure, and I rose quietly, went to the bed where Julia lay sleeping peacefully, and kissed her pale but lovely cheeks. She started, but did not waken—a gentle sigh escaped her lips, and they murmured with some indistinct syllables which I failed to distinguish. At that moment the notes of a flute rose softly from the grove without.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

RENEWED AGONIES.

In that same moment my pangs were all renewed ; my repose of mind departed ; once more my heart was on fire, my spirit filled with vague doubts, grief, and commotion. The soft, sweet, preluding note of the player had touched a chord in my soul as utterly different from that which it expressed, as could by any possibility be conceived. Heart and hope were instantly paralyzed. Fear and its train, its haunting spectres of suspicion, took possession of the undefended citadel, and established guard upon its deserted outposts. I tottered to the window which I had left—I shrouded myself in the folds of the curtain, and as the strains rose, renewed and regular, I struggled to keep in my breath, listening eagerly, as if the complaining instrument could actually give utterance to the cruel mystery which I equally dreaded and desired to hear.

The air which was played was such as I had never heard before. Indeed, it could scarcely be called an air. It was the most capricious burden of mournfulness that had ever had its utterance from wo. Fancy a mute—one bereft of the divine faculty of speech, by human, not divine ministration. Fancy such a being endowed with the loftiest desires, moved by the acutest sensibilities, having already felt the pleasures of life, yet doomed to a denial of utterance, denied the language of complaint, and striving, struggling through the imperfect organs of his voice to give a name to the agony which works within him. That flute seemed to me to moan, and sob, and shiver, with some such painful mode of expression as would be permitted to the "half made-up" mortal of whom I have spoken. Its broken tones,

striving and struggling, almost rising at times into a shriek, seemed of all things to complain of its own voicelessness.

And yet it had its melody—melody, to me, of the most vexing power. I should have called the strain a soliloquizing one. It certainly did not seem addressed to any ears. It wanted the continuance of apostrophe. It was capricious. Sometimes the burden fell off suddenly—broken—wholly interrupted—as if the vents had been all simultaneously and suddenly stopped. Anon, it rose again—soul-piercing if not loud—so abruptly, and with an utterance so utterly gone with wo, that you felt sure the poor heart must break with the next breath that came from the laboring and inefficient lungs. A "dying fall" succeeding, seemed to afford temporary relief. It seemed as if tears must have fallen upon the instrument, Its language grew more methodical, more subdued, but not less touching. I fancied, I felt, that, entering into the soul of the musician, I could give the very words to the sentiment which his instrument vainly strove to speak. What else but despair and utter self-abandonment was in that broken language? The full heart over-burdened, breaking, to find a vent for the feelings which it had no longer power to contain. And yet, content to break, breaking with a melancholy sort of triumph which seemed to say—

"Such a death has its own sweetness; love sanctifies the pang to its victim. It is a sort of martyrdom. He who loves truly, though he loves hopelessly, has not utterly loved in vain. The devoted heart finds a joy in the offering, though the Deity withholds his acceptance—though a sudden gust from heaven scatters abroad the rich fruits which the devotee has placed upon the despised and dishonored altar."

Such, I fancied, was the proud language of that melancholy music. Had I been other than I was—nay, had I listened to the burden under other circumstances and in another place—I should most probably have felt nothing but sympathy for the musician. As it was, I can not describe my feelings. All my racking doubts and miseries returned. The tone of triumph which the strain conveyed wrought upon me like an indignity. It seemed to denote that "foregone conclusion" which had been my cause of apprehension so long. Could it be then that Julia was really guilty? Could she have given William Edgerton so

much encouragement that triumph and exultation should still mingle with his farewell accents of despair? Ah! what fantasies preyed upon my soul; haunted the smallest movements of my mind; conjured up its spectres, and gave bitterness to its every beverage! When I thought thus of Julia, I rose cautiously from my seat, approached the bed where she was lying, and gazed steadily, though with the wildest thrill of emotion, into her face. I verily believe had she not been sleeping at that moment—sleeping beyond question—she would have shared the fate of

"The gentle lady wedded to the Moor."

I was in the mood for desperate things.

But she slept—her cheek upon her arm—pale, but oh! how beautiful! and looking, oh! how pure! Her breathing was as tranquil and regular as that of an infant. I felt, while I gazed, that hers must be the purity of an infant also. I turned from beholding her, as the renewed notes of the musician once more ascended to the chamber. I again took my seat at the window and concealed myself behind the curtain. Here I had been concealed but a few moments, when I heard a rustling in the branches of the tree. Meanwhile, the music again ceased. I peered cautiously from behind the drapery, and fancied I beheld a dark object in the tree. It might be one of its branches, but I had not been struck by it before. I waited in breathless watchfulness. I saw it move. Its shape was that of a man. An exulting feeling of violence filled my breast. I rose stealthily, went into the dressing-room, and took up one of my pistols which lay on the toilet, and which I had that afternoon prepared with a travelling charge.

"A brace of bullets," I muttered to myself, "will bring out another sort of music from this rare bird."

With this murderous purpose I concealed myself once more behind the curtain. The figure was sufficiently distinct for aim. The window was not more than twelve or fourteen paces from the tree. My nerves were now as steady as if I had been about to perform the most ordinary action. What then prevented me? What stayed my arm? A single thought—a momentary recollection of an event which had taken place in my boyhood.

What a providence that it should have occurred to me at that particular moment. The circumstance was this.

When first sent to school I had been frequently taken at advantage by a bigger boy. He had twice my strength—he took a strong dislike for me—perhaps, because I was unwilling to pay him that deference, which, as school-bully, he extorted from all others;—and he drubbed me accordingly, whenever an opportunity occurred. My resistance was vain, and only stimulated him to increased brutality. One day he was lying upon the grass, beneath an oak which stood in the centre of a common on which we usually played. It happened that I drew near him unperceived. In approaching him I had no purpose of assault or violence. But the circumstance of my nearing him without being seen, suggested to my mind a sudden thought of revenging all my previous injuries. I felt bitterness and hate enough, had I possessed the strength, to have slain a dozen. I do not know that I had any design to slay him—to revenge myself was certainly my wish. Of death probably I had no idea. I looked about me for the agent of my vengeance. A pile of old brick which had formed the foundations of a dwelling which had stood on the spot, and which had been burned, conveniently presented itself to my eye. I possessed myself of as large a fragment as my little hand could grasp; I secured a second as a dernier resort. Slowly and slily—I may add, basely—I approached him from behind, levelled the brick at his head, and saw the blood fly an instant after the contact. He was stunned by the blow, staggered up, however, with his eyes blinded by blood, and moved after me like a drunken man. I receded slowly, lifting the remaining fragment which I held, intending, if he approached me, to repeat the blow.

On a sudden he fell forward sprawling. Then I thought him dead, and for the first time the dreadful consciousness of my crime in its true character, came to my mind. I can not describe the agony of fear and horror which filled my soul. He did not die, but he was severely hurt.

The recollection of that event—of what I then suffered—came to me involuntarily, as I was about to perform a second similar crime. I shuddered with the recollection of the past, and shrunk, under the equal force of shame and conscience,

from the performance of a deed which, otherwise, I should probably have committed in the brief time which I employed for reflection. With a feeling of nervous horror I put the weapon aside, and sinking once more into the chair beside the window I bore with what fortitude I might, the renewal of the accursed but touching strains that vexed me.

William Edgerton was a master of the flute. Often before, when we were the best friends, had I listened with delight, while he compelled it into discourse of music wild and somewhat incoherent still: his present performance had now attained more continuousness and character. It was still mournful, but its sorrows rose and fell naturally, in compliance with the laws of art. I listened till I could listen no longer. Human patience must have its limits. My wife still slept. I descended the stairs, opened the door with as much cautiousness as possible, and prepared to grapple the musician and haul him into the light.

It might be Edgerton or not. I was morally sure it was. By grappling with him, in such a situation, I should bring the affair to a final issue, though it might not be a murderous one. But of that I did not think; I went forward to do something; what that something was to be, it was left for time and chance to determine. But, suddenly, as I opened the door, the music ceased. Stepping into the yard, I heard the sound as of a falling body. I naturally concluded that he had heard the opening of the door, and had suffered himself to drop down to the ground. I took for granted that he had descended on the opposite side of the yard and within the enclosure of a neighbor. I leaped the fence, hurried to the tree, traversed the grounds, and found nobody. I returned, reached my own premises, and found the gate open which opened upon the street. He had gone then in that direction. I turned into the street, posted with all speed to the corner of the square, and met only the watchman. I asked, but he had seen nobody. The street was perfectly quiet. I returned, reascended to my chamber, found Julia now awake, and evidently much agitated. She had arisen in my absence, and was only about to re-enter the bed when I rushed up stairs.

What was I to think? What fear? I was too conscious of

the suspicious nature of my thoughts and fears to suffer myself to ask any questions—and she, unhappily for both of us—she said nothing. Had she but spoken—had she but uttered the natural inquiry—"Did you hear that strange music, husband?"—how much easier had been her extrication. But she was silent, and I was again let loose upon a wide sea of fears and doubts and damnable apprehensions. Once more, and now with a feeling which would not have made me forbear the use of any weapon, however deadly, I re-examined my own enclosure, but in vain. The horrible thought which possessed me was that he had even penetrated the dwelling while I was seeking him in the street; that they had met; and how was I to know the degree of tenderness which had marked their meeting and given sweetness to their adieus!

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE NEW HOME.

With these revived suspicions, half stifled, but still struggling in my bosom, did I commence my journey for the West. My arrangements were comprehensive, but simple. I had procured a second-hand travelling carriage and fine pair of horses from an acquaintance, at a very moderate price—a price which, I well knew, I should easily get for them again on reaching my place of destination. I was my own driver. I had no money to spare in purchasing what might be dispensed with. A single trunk contained all the necessary luggage of my wife and self. What was not absolutely needed by the wayside was sent on by water. This included my books, desks, Julia's painting materials, and such other articles of the household, as were of cost and not bulky. I had previously written—as I may have stated already—to my friend Kingsley. He was to procure me temporary lodgings in the town of M——. I left much to his judgment and experience. He had once before been in Alabama and having interests there, had made himself familiar with everything in that region, necessary to be known. I put myself very much in his hands. I was too anxious to get away to urge any difficulties or make any troublesome requisitions. He was simply to procure me an abiding-place in some private family—if possible in the suburbs—until I should be able to look about me. Economy was insisted upon. I had precious little money to spare, and even the spoils of my one night's visit to the gaming-house, were of no small help in sustaining me in my determination to remove. I had not applied them previously. I confess to a feeling of shame when I was compelled by necessity at last

to use them. I had saved something already from my professional income, and I procured an advance on my furniture which was left for sale. I had calculated my expenses in removing and for one year's residence in M——, and was prepared, so far as poor human foresight may prepare itself, to keep want from our doors at least for that period. I trusted to good fortune, my own resources, and the notorious fact that, at that day, there were few able lawyers in M——, to secure me an early and valuable practice. I carried with me letters from the best men in the community I had left. But I carried with me what was of more value than any letters, even though they be written in gold. I carried with me methodical habits and an energy of character which would maintain my resolution, and bear me through, to a safe conclusion, in any plan which I should contemplate. Industry and perseverance are the giants that cast down forests, drain swamps, level mountains, and create empires. I flattered myself that with these I had other and crowning qualities of intellect and culture. Perhaps it may be admitted that I had. But of what avail were all when coupled with the blind heart? Enough—I must not anticipate.

Filled with the exciting fancies engendered by the affair of the last night, I commenced my journey. The day was a fine one; the sun cheery and bright without being oppressive; and soon, gliding through the broad avenues, lined with noblest trees, which conducted us from the city to the forests, we had the pleasant carol of birds, and the lively chirp of hopping insects.

I was always a lover of the woods; green shady dells, and winding walks amidst crowding foliage. I cared little for mere flowers. A garden was never a desire in my mind. I could be pleased to see and to smell, but I had no passion for its objects. But the trees—the big, venerable oaks, like patriarchs and priests; the lofty and swaggering pines in their green helmets, like warriors of the feudal ages—these were forms that I could worship. I may say, I loved trees with a real passion. Flowers, and the taste for flowers seemed to me always petty; but my instincts led me to behold a speaking and most impressive grandeur, in these old lords of the forest, that had been the first, rising from the mighty mother to attest the wondrous strength of her resources, and the teeming glories of her womb.

Now, however, they did not fill my soul with earnest reachings, as had ever been the case before. They soothed me somewhat, but the eyes of my mind were turned within. They looked only at the prostration of that miserable heart which was torturing itself with vague, wild doubts — guessing and conjecturing with an agonizing pain, and without the least hope of profit. I could not drive from my thoughts, the vexing circumstances of the last night in the city; and, for the first day of our journey, the hours moved with oppressive slowness. Objects which I had formerly loved to contemplate and always found sweet and refreshing, now gave me little pleasure and exacted little of my attention; and I reached our stopping-place for the night with a sense of weariness and stupor which no mere fatigue of body, I well knew, could ever have occasioned.

But this could not last. The elasticity of my nature, joined with the absence of that one person whom I had now learned to regard as my evil genius, soon enabled me to shake off the oppressive doubts and sadness which fettered and enfeebled me. Once more I began to behold the forests with all the eyes of former delight and affection, and I was conscious, after the progress of a day or two, of periods in which I entirely lost sight of William Edgerton and all my suspicions in the sweet warmth of a fresh and pleasing contemplation.

Something of this — nay, perhaps, the most of it, was due to my wife herself. There was a change in her air and manner which sensibly affected my heart. I had treated her coldly at first, but she had not perceived it; at least she had not suffered it to influence her conduct; and I was equally pleased and surprised to behold in her language, looks, and deportment, a degree of life and buoyant animation, which reminded me of the very champagne exuberance and spirit of her youth. Her eyes flashed with a sense of freedom. Her voice sounded with the silvery clearness of one, who, long pent up in the limits of a dungeon, uses the first moment of escape into the forests to delight himself with song. She seemed to have just thrown off a miserable burden; — and, as for any grief — any sign of regret at leaving home and ties from which she would not willingly part — there was not the slightest appearance of any such feeling in her mind, look, or manner. Kindly, considerately, and

sweetly, and with a cheery smile in her eyes, and a springing vigor in the accents of her voice, she strove to enliven the way and to expel the gloom which she soon perceived had fastened itself upon my soul. Her own cares, if she had any, seemed to be very slight, and were utterly lost in mine. She spoke of our new abiding-place with a hearty confidence; that it would be at once a home of prosperity and peace; and, altogether convinced me for the time that the sacrifice must be comparatively very small, which she had made on leaving her birth-place. I very soon wondered that I should have fancied that William Edgerton was ever more to her than the friend of her husband.

Our journey was slow but not tedious. Had our progress been only half so rapid, I should have been satisfied. It was love alone that my heart wanted. I craved for nothing but the just requital of my own passion. I had no complaint, no affliction, when I could persuade myself that I had not thrown away my affections upon the ungrateful and undeserving. Assured now of the love of the beloved one, all the intense devotion of my soul was re-awakened; and the deepest shadows of the forest, gloomy and desolate as they were, along the waste tracts of Georgia and Alabama—in that earlier day—enlivened by the satisfied spirit within, seemed no more than so many places of retreat, where security and peace, combining in behalf of Love, had given him an exclusive sovereignty.

The rude countryman encountered us, and his face beamed with cheerfulness and good humor. The song of the black softened the toils of labor, in the unfinished clearings; and even the wild red man, shooting suddenly from out the sylvan covert, wore in his visage of habitual gravity, an air of resignation which took all harshness from his uncouth features.

Such, under the tuition of well-satisfied hearts, was our mutual experience of the long journey which we had taken when we reached the end of it. This we did in perfect safety. We found our friend, Kingsley, prepared for and awaiting us. He had procured us pleasant apartments in a neat cottage in the suburbs, where we were almost to ourselves. Our landlady was an ancient widow, without a family. She occupied but a single apartment in her house, and left the use of the rest to her lodgers. This was an arrangement with which I was par-

ticularly gratified. Her cottage lay half way up on the side of a hill which was crowned with thick clumps of the noblest trees. Long, winding, narrow foot-paths, carried us picturesquely to the summit, where we had a bird's-eye view of the town below, the river beyond—now darting out from the woods and now hiding securely beneath their umbrage—and fair, smooth, lawn-looking fields, which glowed at the proper season with the myriad green and white plumes of corn and cotton. At the foot of the cottage lay a delightful shrubbery, which almost covered it up from sight. It was altogether such a retreat as a hermit would desire. It reminded me somewhat of the lovely spot which we had left. A pleasant walk of a mile lay between it and the town where I proposed to practice, and this furnished a necessity for a certain degree of exercise, which, being unavoidable, was of the most valuable kind. Altogether, Kingsley had executed his commission with a taste and diligence which left me nothing to complain of.

He was delighted at my coming.

"You are nearer to me now," he said; "will be nearer at least when I get to Texas; and I do not despair to see you making tracks after me when I go there."

"But when go you?"

"Not soon. I am in some trouble here. I am pleading and being impleaded. You are just come in season to take up the cudgels for me. My landrights are disputed—my titles. You will have something of a lawsuit to begin upon at your earliest leisure."

"Indeed! but what's the business?"

He gave me a statement of his affairs, placed his papers in my hands, and I found myself, on inspecting them, engaged in a controversy which was likely to give me the opportunity which I desired, of appearing soon in cases of equal intricacy and interest. Kingsley had some ten thousand dollars in land, the greater part of which was involved in questions of title and preemption, presenting some complex features, and likely to occasion bad blood among certain trespassers whom it became our first duty to oust if possible. I was associated with a spirited young lawyer of the place; a youth of great natural talent, keen, quick intellect, much readiness of resource, yet little ex-

perience and less reading. Like the great mass of our western men, however, he was a man to improve. He had no self-conceit—did not delude himself with the idea that he knew as much as his neighbor; and, consequently, was pretty certain to increase in wisdom with increase of years. He had few prejudices to get over, and though he knew his strength, he also knew his weakness. He felt the instinct of natural talent, but he did not deceive himself on the subject of his deficient knowledge. He was willing to learn whenever he could find a teacher. His name was Wharton. I took to him at once. He was an ardent, manly fellow—frank as a boy—could laugh and weep in the same hour, and yet was as firm in his principles, as if he could neither laugh nor weep. As an acquaintance he was an acquisition.

Kingsley was delighted to see me, though somewhat wondering that I should give up the practice at home, where I was doing so well, to break ground in a region where I was utterly unknown. He gave me little trouble, however, in accounting to him for this movement. It was not difficult to persuade him—nay, he soon persuaded himself—that something of my present course was due to his own counsel and suggestion. To a man, like himself, to whom mere transition was pleasure, it needed no argument to show that my resolve was right.

"Who the d—l," he exclaimed, "would like always to be in the same place? Such a person is a mere cipher. We estab lish an intellectual superiority when we show ourselves superior to place. A genuine man is always a citizen of the world. It is your vegetable man that can not go far without grumbling, finding fault with all he sees, talking of comforts and such small matters, and longing to get home again. Such a man puts me in mind of every member of the cow family that I ever knew. He is never at peace with himself or the world, but always groaning and thrusting out his horns, until he can get back to his old range, and revel in his native marsh, joint-grass, and cane-tops. Englishmen are very much of this breed. They go abroad, grumble as they go, and if they can not carry their cane-tops with them, afflict the whole world with their lamentations. I take it for granted, Clifford, that this step to Alabama, is simply a step toward Texas. Your next will

be to New Orleans, and then, presto, we shall see you on the Sabine."

"I hope not," said my wife. "You have got us into such comfortable quarters here, Mr. Kingsley, that I hope you will do nothing to tempt my husband farther. Go farther and fare worse, you know. Let well enough alone."

"Oh, I beseech you!—two proverbs at a time will be fatal to one or other of us. Perhaps both. But he can not fare worse by going to Texas."

"He will do well enough here."

"Perhaps."

"Recover your lands, for example, as a beginning."

"Ah! now you would bribe me. That is certainly a suggestion to make me keep my tongue, at least until the verdict is rendered. 'Till then, you know, I shall make no permanent remove myself."

"But do you mean to go before the trial?" I asked.

"Yes, for a couple of months or so. I should only get into some squabble with my opponents by remaining here; and I may be preparing for all of us by going in season. I will look out for a township, Mrs. Clifford, on the edge of some beautiful prairie, and near some beautiful river. Your husband has a passion for water prospects, I can tell you, and would become a misanthrope without them. I am doubtful if he will be happy, indeed, if not within telescope distance from the sea itself. I don't think that a river will altogether satisfy him."

"Oh yes, *this* must;" and as she spoke she pointed to the fair glassy surface of the Alabama, as it stretched away, at intervals, in broad glimpses before our eyes.

"Well, we shall see; but I will make my preparations, nevertheless, precisely as if he were not likely to be content. I have formed to myself a plan for all of you. I must make a dear little colony of our own in Texas. We shall have a nest of the sweetest little cottages, each with its neat little garden. In the centre we shall have a neat little playground for our neat little children; on the hill a neat little church; in the grove a neat little library; on the river a neat little barge; and over this neat little empire, you, Lady Clifford, shall be the neat little empress."

"Dear me! what a neat little establishment!"

"It shall be all that, I assure you; and it shall have other advantages. You shall have a kingdom free from taxes and wars. There shall be no law-givers but yourself. We shall have no elections except when we elect our wives, and the women shall be the only voters then. We shall have no customhouses—everything shall be free of duty;—we shall have no banks—everything shall be free of charge;—we shall have no parson, for shall we not be sinless?"

"But what will you do with the neat little church?"

"Oh! that we shall keep merely to remind us of what is necessary in less fortunate communities."

"Very good; but how, if you have no parsons, will you perform the marriage ceremony?"

"That shall be a natural operation of government. The voters having given their suffrages, you shall determine and declare with whom the majority lies, and give a certificate to that effect. The first choice will lie with the damsel having the highest number of votes; the second with the next; and so on to the end of the chapter; and then elections are to take place annually among the unmarried—the ladies being the privileged class as I said before. You will keep a record of these events, the names of parties, and so forth; and this record shall be proof, conclusive to conviction, against any party falling off from his or her duties."

"Quite a system. I do not deny that our sex will have some new privileges by this arrangement."

"Unquestionably. But you have not heard all. We shall have no doctors, for we shall have no diseases in the beautiful world to which I shall carry you. We shall have no lawyers, for we shall have no wrangling."

"Indeed; but what is my husband to do then?"

"Why, he is your husband. What should he do? He takes rank from you. You are queen, you know. He will have no need of law"

"There's reason in that; but how will you prevent wrangling where there are men and women?"

"Oh, by giving the women their own way. The government

is a despotism — you are queen — surely you will make no further objection to so admirable a system?"

In good-humored chat like this, in which our landlady, Mrs. Porterfield — a lady who, though fully sixty-five years of age, was yet of a cheery and chatty disposition — took considerable part, our first evening passed away. Though fatigued, we sat up until a tolerably late hour, enlivened by the frank spirit of our friend, Kingsley, and inspired by the natural feeling of curiosity which our change of situation inspired. It was midnight before we solicited the aid of sleep.

CHAPTER XL.

THE BLACK DOG ONCE MORE UPON THE SCENE.

THE next day was devoted to an examination of our premises and the neighborhood. The result of this examination was such as to render us better satisfied with the change that we had made. We were still young enough to be sensible to the loveliness of novelty. Everything wore that purple light which the eye of youth confers upon the object. And then there was repose. That harassing strife of the "blind heart" was at rest. I had no more suspicions; and my wife looked and spoke as if she had never had either doubts of me, or fears of herself, within her bosom. I was happiness itself, when, by the unreserved ease and gayety of her deportment she persuaded me that she suffered no regrets. I little fancied how much the change in my wife's manner had arisen from the involuntary change which had been going on in mine. I now looked the love which I felt; and she felt, in the improvement of my looks, the renewal of that fond passion which I had never ceased to feel, but which I had only too much ceased to show while suffering from the "blind heart." She resumed her old amusements with new industry. Our little parlor received constant accessions of new pictures. All our leisure was employed in exploring the scenery of the neighborhood; and not a bit of forest, or patch of hill, or streak of rivulet or stream, to which the genius of art could lend loveliness, but she picked up, in these happy rambles, and worked into fitting places upon our cottage walls.

Our good old hostess became attached to us. She virtually surrendered the management of the household to my wife. She was old and quite infirm; and was frequently confined for days

to her chamber; which must have been a solitary place enough before our coming. My wife became a companion to her in these periods of painful seclusion, and thus provided her with a luxury which had been long denied her. Under these circumstances we had very much our own way. The old lady had few associates, and these were generally very worthy people. They soon became our associates also, and under the influence of better feelings than had governed me for a long time past, I now found myself in a condition of comfort, cheerfulness, and peace, which I fancied I had forfeited for ever.

Two weeks after our arrival, Kingsley took his departure for Texas, on a visit. He proposed to be absent two months. His object, as he had described it before, in some pleasant exaggerations, was to select some favorable spots for purchase, which should combine as nearly as possible the three prime requisites of salubrity, fertility, and beauty. His object was to speculate; "and this was to be done," he said, "at an early hour of the day." "The Spanish proverb," he was wont to say, "which regulates the eating of oranges, is not a bad rule to govern a man in making his speculations. Speculations (oranges) are gold at morning, silver at noon, and lead at night. It is your wise man," he added, "who buys and sells early; your merely sensible man who does so at midday; while your dunce, waiting for an increased appetite at evening, swallows nothing but lead."

I was in some respects a very fortunate man. If I had been a wise one! It has been seen that I was singularly successful in business at my first beginning in my native city. I had not been long in the town of M——, before I began to congratulate myself on the prospect of like fortune attending me there. The affairs of Kingsley brought me into contact with several men of business. My letters of introduction made me acquainted with many more; not simply of the town, but of the neighboring country. My ardency of temper was particularly suited to a frank, confiding people, such as are most of the southwestern men; and one or two accidental circumstances yielded me professional occupation long before I expected to find it. I had occasion to appear in court at an early day, and succeeded in making a favorable impression upon my hearers. To be a good

speaker, in the south and southwest, is to be everything. Eloquence implies wisdom—at least all the wisdom which is supposed to be necessary in making lawyers and law-makers—a precious small modicum of a material by no means precious. I was supposed to have the gift of the gab in moderate perfection, and my hearers were indulgent. My name obtained circulation, and, in a short time, I discovered that, in a professional as well as personal point of view, I had no reason to regret the change of residence which I had made. Business began to flow in upon me. Applications reached me from adjoining counties, and though my fees, like the cases which I was employed in, were of moderate amount, they promised to be frequent, while my clients generally were very substantial persons.

It will not need that I should dwell farther on these topics. It will be sufficient to show that, in worldly respects, I was as likely to prosper in my new as in my past abode. In social respects I had still more reason to be gratified. The days went by with me as smoothly as with Thalaba. My wife was all that I could wish. She was the very Julia whom I had married. Nay, she was something more—something better. Her health improved, and with it her spirits. She evidently had no regrets. A sigh never escaped her. Her content and cheerfulness were wonderful. She had none of that vague, vain yearning which the feeble feel, called "home-sickness." She convinced me that I was her home—the only home that she desired. It was evident that she thought less of our ancient city than I did myself. I am sure that if either of us, at any moment, felt a desire to look upon it again, the person was myself. I maintained a correspondence with the place—received the newspapers, groped over them with persevering industry—nay—missed not the advertisements, and was disappointed and a discontent on those days when the mail failed. My wife had no such appetite. She sometimes read the papers, but she appeared to have no curiosity; and, with the exception of an occasional letter which she received from her mother, she had no intercourse whatever with her former home.

All this was calculated to satisfy me. But this was not all. If gentleness, sweetness, cheerfulness, and a sleepless consideration of one's wants and feelings, could convince any mortal of

the love of another—I must have been satisfied. We resumed most of the habits which began with our marriage, but which had been so long discontinued. We rose with the sun, and went abroad after his example. Like him we rose to the hill-tops, and then descended into the valleys. We grew familiar with the deepest shades of wood and forest while the dewdrops were yet beading the bosoms of the wild flowers; and we followed the meandering course of the Alabama, long before the smoking steamer vexed it with her flashing paddles. My professional toils from breakfast to dinner-time—for this interval I studiously gave to my office, even if I had little to do there—occasioned the only interregnum which I knew in the positive pleasures which I enjoyed. In the afternoon our enjoyments were renewed. Our cottage was so sweetly secluded, that we did not need to go far in order to find the Elysian grove which we desired. At the top of our hill we were surrounded by a natural temple of proud pines—guarding the spot from any but that sort of divine and religious light which streams through the painted windows of the ancient cathedral. The gay glances of the sun came gliding through the foliage in drops, and lay upon the grass in little pale, fanciful gleams, most like eyes of fairies peeping upward from its velvety tufts. Here we read together from the poets—sometimes Julia sung, even while sketching. Not unfrequently, Mrs. Porterfield came with us, and, at such times, our business was to detect distant glimpses of barge, or steamboat, as they successively darted into sight, along such of the glittering patches of the Alabama as were revealed to us in its downward progress through the woods.

Our evenings were such as hallow and make the luxury of cottage life—evenings yielded up to cheerfulness, to content and harmony. Between music, and poetry, and painting, my heart was subdued to the sweetest refinements of love. Without the immorality, we had the very atmosphere of a Sybarite indulgence. I was enfeebled by the excess of sweets; and the happiness which I felt expressed itself in signs. These denoted my presentiments. My apprehensions were my sole cause of doubt and sorrow. How could such enjoyments last? Was it possible, with any, that they should last? Was it

possible that they should last with me? I should have been mad to think it.

But, in the sweet delirium which their possession inspired, I almost forgot the past. The soul of man is the most elastic thing in nature. Those harassing tortures of the heart which I had been suffering for months—those weary days of exhausting doubt—those long nights of torturing suspicion—the shame and the fear, the sting of jealousy, and the suffering—I had almost forgotten in the absorbing pleasures of my new existence. If I remembered them it was only to smile; if I thought of William Edgerton it was only to pity;—and, as for Julia, deep was the crimson shadow upon my cheek, whenever the reproachful memory reminded me of the tortures which I had inflicted upon her gentle heart while laboring under the tortures of my own—when I thought of the unmanly espionage which I had maintained over conduct which I now felt to be irreproachable.

But, just at the moment when I thus thought and felt—when I no longer suffered and no longer inflicted pain—when my wife was not only virtue in my sight, but love, and beauty, and grace, and meekness—all that was good and all that was dear besides;—when my sky was without a cloud, and the evening star shone through the blue sky upon the green tops of our cottage trees, with the serene lustre of a May-divinity—just then a thunderbolt fell upon my dwelling, and blackened the scene for ever.

I had now been three months a resident in M——, and never had I been more happy—never less apprehensive on the score of my happiness—when I received a letter from my venerable friend and patron, the father of William Edgerton.

"My son," he wrote, "is no better than when you left us. We have every reason to believe him worse. He has a cough, he is very thin, and there is a flushed spot upon his cheek which seems to his mother and myself the indubitable sign of vital decay. His frame is very feeble, and our physician advises travel. Under this counsel he set off with a favorite servant on Wednesday of last week. He will make easy stages through Tennessee to the Ohio, will descend into Mississippi, and return home by way of Alabama. He contemplates paying you a

brief visit. I need not say, dear Clifford, how grateful I shall be for any kindness which you can show to my poor boy. His mother particularly invokes it. I should not have deemed it necessary to say so much, but would have preferred leaving it to William to make his own communication, were it not that she so particularly desires it. It may be well to add, that on one subject we are both very much relieved. We now have reason to believe that our apprehensions on the score of his morals were without foundation. It is our present belief that he neither gamed nor drank. This is a consolation, dear Clifford, though it brings us no nigher to our wish. It is something to believe that the object of our love is not worthless; though it adds to the pang that we should feel in the event of losing him. Our parting would be less easy. For my own part, I have little hope that his journey will do him any material benefit. It may prolong his days, but can not, I fear, have any more decided influence upon his disease. His mother, however, is more sanguine, and it is perhaps well that she should be so. I know that when William reaches your neighborhood, you will make it as cheerful and pleasant to him as possible. The talent of your young and sweet wife—her endowments in painting and music—have always been a great solace to him. His tastes you know are very much like hers. I trust she will exercise them, and be happy in ministering to the comfort of one, who will not, I fear, trespass very long upon any earthly ministry. My dear Clifford, I know that you will do your utmost in behalf of your earliest friend, and I will waste no more words in unnecessary solicitation."

Such was the important portion of the letter. In an instant, as I read it, I saw, with the instinct of jealousy, the annihilation of all my hopes of happiness. All my dreams were in the dust—all my fancies scattered—my schemes and temples overthrown. Bitter was the pang I felt on reading this letter. It said more—much more—in the very language of solicitation, which the good old father professed to believe unnecessary. He poured forth the language of a father's grief and entreaty. I felt for the venerable man—the true friend—in spite of my own miserable apprehensions. I felt for him, but what could I do? What would he have me do? I had no house in which

to receive his son. He would lodge, perhaps, for a time, in the community. It could not be supposed that he would remain long. The letter of the father spoke only of a brief visit. Our neighborhood had no repute, as a place of resort, for consumptive patients. I consoled myself with the reflection that William Edgerton could, on no pretence, linger more than a week or two among us. I will treat him kindly—give him the freedom of the house while he remains. A dying man, if so he be, must have reached a due sense of his situation, and will not be likely to trespass upon the rights of another. His passions must be subdued by this time. Ah! but will not his condition be more likely to inspire sympathy?

The fiend of the blind heart prompted that last suggestion. It was the only one that I remembered. When I returned home that day to dinner, I mentioned, as if casually, the letter I had received, and the contents. My eye narrowly watched that of my wife while I spoke. Hers sunk beneath my glance Her cheeks were suddenly flushed—then, as suddenly, grew pale, and I observed, that, though she appeared to eat, but few morsels of food were carried into her mouth that day. She soon left the table, and, pleading headache declined joining me in our usual evening rambles.

CHAPTER XLI.

TRIAL — THE WOMAN GROWS STRONG.

THUS, then, I was once more at sea, rudderless — not yet companionless — perhaps, soon to be so. My relapse was as sudden as my thought. It seemed as if every past misery of doubt and suspicion were at once revived within me. All my day-dreams vanished in an instant. William Edgerton would again behold — would again seek — my wife. They must meet; I owed that to the father; and, whatever the condition of the son might be, it was evident that his feelings toward her must be the same as ever; else, why should he seek her out? — why pursue our footsteps and haunt my peace? I must receive him and treat him kindly for the father's sake; but that one bitter thought, that he was pursuing us, the deadly enemy to my peace — and now, evidently, a wilful one — gave venom to the bitter feeling with which I had so long regarded his attentions.

It was evident, too, whatever may have been its occasion, that the knowledge of his coming awakened strange emotions in the bosom of my wife. That blush — that sudden paleness of the cheek — what was their language? I fain would have struggled against the conviction, that it denoted a guilty consciousness of the past — a guilty feeling of the future. But the mocking demon of the blind heart forced the assurance upon me. What was to be done? Ah! what? This was the question, and there was no variation in the reply which my jealous spirit made. There was but one refuge. I must pursue the same insidious policy as before. I must resort to the same subterfuge, meet them with the same smiles, disguise once more the true features of my soul; seem to shut my eyes, and afford them the

same opportunities as before, in the torturing hope (fear ?) that I should finally detect them in some guilty folly which would be sufficient to justify the final punishment. I must put on the aspect of indifference, the better to pursue the vocation of the spy.

Base necessity, but still, as I then fancied, a necessity not the less. Ah! was I not a thing to be pitied? Was ever any case more pitiable than mine? I ask not this question with any hope that an answer may be found to justify my conduct. It is not the less pitiable—nay, it is more—that no such answer can be found. My folly is not the less a thing of pity, because it is also a thing of scorn. That was the pity—and yet, I was most severely tried. Deep were my sufferings! Strong was that demon within me—I care not how engendered, whether by the fault and folly of others, or by my own—still it was strong. If I was guilty—base, blind—was I not also suffering? Never did I inflict on the bosom of Julia Clifford, so deep a pang as I daily—nay, hourly, inflicted upon my own. She was a victim, true—but was I less so! But she was innocently a victim, therefore, less a sufferer, whatever her sufferings, than me! Let none condemn or curse me, till they have asked what curse I have already undergone. I live!—they will say. Ah! me! They must ask what is the value of life, not to themselves, but to a crushed, a blasted heart, like mine! But I hurry forward with my pangs rather than my story.

Instantly, a barrier seemed to rise up between Julia Clifford and myself. She had her consciousness, evidently, no less than I. What was *that* consciousness? Ah! could I have guessed *that*, there would have been no barrier—all might have been peace again. But a destiny was at work which forbade it all; and we strove ignorantly with one another and against ourselves. There was a barrier between us, which our mutual blindness of heart made daily thicker, and higher, and less liable to overthrow. A coldness overspread my manner. I made it a sort of shelter. The guise of indifference is one of the most convenient for hiding other and darker feelings. Already we ceased to ramble by river and through wood. Already the pencil was discarded. We could no longer enjoy the things which so lately made us happy, because we no longer entertained the same con-

fidence in one another. Without this confidence there is no communion sweet. And all this had been the work of that letter. The name of William Edgerton had done it all—his name and threatened visit!

But—and I read the letter again and again—it would be some time before he might be expected. The route, as laid down for him by his father, was a protracted one. "Through Georgia, Tennessee, Mississippi, then homeward, by way of Alabama." "He can not be here in less than six weeks. He must travel slowly. He must make frequent rests."

And there was a further thought—a hope—which, though it filled my mind, I did not venture to express in words. "He may perish on his route: if he be so feeble, it is by no means improbable!"

At all events, I had six weeks' respite—perhaps more. Such was my small consolation then. But even this was false. In less than a week from that time, William Edgerton stood at the door of our cottage!

Instead of going into Tennessee, he had shot straight forward, through Georgia, into Alabama.

Though surprised, I was not confounded by his presence. Under the policy which I had resolved upon, I received him with the usual professions of kindness, and a manner as nearly warm and natural as the exercise of habitual art could make it. He certainly did look very miserable. His features wore an expression of uniform despair. They brightened up, when he beheld my wife, as the cloud brightens suddenly beneath the moonlight. His eyes were riveted upon her. He was almost speechless, but he advanced and took her hand, which I observed was scarcely extended to him. He sat the evening with us, and a chilly, dull evening it was. He himself spoke little—my wife less; and the conversation, such as it was, was carried on chiefly between old Mrs. Porterfield and myself. But I could see that Edgerton employed his eyes in a manner which fully compensated for the silence of his tongue. They were seldom withdrawn from the quarter of the apartment in which my wife sat. When withdrawn, it was but for an instant, and they soon again reverted to the spot. He had certainly acquired a degree of boldness, which, in this respect, he had not

before possessed. I keenly analyzed his looks without provoking his attention. It was not possible for me to mistake the unreserved admiration that his glance expressed. There was a strange spiritual expression in his eyes, which was painful to the spectator. It was that fearful sign which the soul invariably makes when it begins to exert itself at the expense of the shell which contains it. It was the sign of death already written. But he might linger for months. His cough did not seem to me oppressive. The flush was not so obvious upon his cheek. Perhaps, looking through the medium of my peculiar feelings, his condition was not half so apparent as his designs. At least, I felt my sympathies in his behalf—small as they were before—become feebler with every moment of his stay that night.

"Edgerton does not appear to me to look so badly," I said to Julia, after his departure for the evening.

"I don't know," she answered; "he looks very pale and miserable."

"Quite interesting!" I added, with a smile which might have been a sneer.

"Painfully so. He can not last very long—his cough is very troublesome."

"Indeed! I scarcely heard it. He is certainly a very fine-looking fellow still, consumption or no consumption."

She was silent.

"A very graceful fellow: very generous and with accomplishments such as are possessed by few. I have often envied him his person and accomplishments."

"You?" she exclaimed, with something like an expression of incredulity.

"Yes!—that is to say, when I was a youth, and when I thought more of commending myself to your eyes, than of anything besides."

"Ah!" she replied with an assuring smile, "you never needed qualities other than your own to commend yourself to me."

"Pleasant hypocrite! And yet, Julia, would you not be better pleased if I could draw and color, and talk landscape with you by the hour?"

"No! I have never thought of your doing anything of the kind."

"Like begets liking."

"It may be, but I do not think so. I do not think we love people so much for what they can do, as for what they are."

"Ah, Julia, that is a great mistake. It is a law in morals, that the qualities of men should depend upon their performances. What a man is, results from what he does, and so we judge of persons. Edgerton is a noble fellow; his tastes are very fine. I suspect he can form as correct an opinion of a fine picture as any one — perhaps, paint it as finely."

She was silent.

"Do you not think so, Julia?"

"I think he paints very well for an amateur."

"He is certainly a man of exquisite taste in most matters of taste and elegance. I have always thought his manners particularly easy and dignified. His carriage is at once manly and graceful; and his dancing — do you not think he dances with admirable flexibility?"

"Really, Edward, I can scarcely regard dancing as a manly accomplishment. It is necessary that a gentleman should dance, perhaps, but it appears to me that he should do so simply because it is necessary; and to pass through the measure without ostentation or offence should be his simple object."

"These are not usually the opinions of ladies, Julia."

"They are mine, however."

"You are not sure. You will think otherwise to-morrow. At all events, I think there can be little doubt that Edgerton is one of the best dancers in the circle we have left; he has the happiest taste in painting and poetry; and a more noble gentleman and true friend does not exist anywhere. I know not to whom I could more freely confide life, wealth, and honor, than to him."

She was silent. I fancied there was something like distress apparent in her countenance. I continued: —

"There is one thing, Julia, about which I am not altogether satisfied."

"Ah!" with much anxiety; "what is that?"

"I owe so much to his father, that, in his present condition, I fancy we ought to receive him in our house. We should not

let him go among strangers, exposed to the noise and neglect of a hotel."

There was some abruptness in her answer :—

"I do not see how you can bring him here. You forget that we are mere lodgers ourselves; indebted for our accommodation to the kindness of a lady upon whom we should have no right to press other lodgers. Such an arrangement would crowd the house, and make all parties uncomfortable. Besides, I suppose Mr. Edgerton will scarcely remain long enough in M—— to make it of much importance where he lodges, and when he finds the tavern uncomfortable he will take his departure."

"But should he get sick at the tavern?"

"Such a chance would follow him wherever he went. That is the risk which every man incurs when he goes abroad. He has a servant with him—no doubt a favorite servant."

"Should he get sick, Julia, even a favorite servant will not be enough. It will be our duty to make other provision for him. I owe his father much; the old man evidently expects much from me by his last letter. I owe the son much. He has been a true friend to me. I must do for him as if he were a brother, and should he get sick, Julia, you must be his nurse."

"Impossible, Mr. Clifford!" she replied, with unwonted energy, while a deep, dark flush settled over her otherwise placid features, which were now not merely discomposed but ruffled. "It is impossible that I should be what you require. Suffer me, in this case, to determine my duties for myself. Do for *your friend* what you think proper. You can provide a nurse, and secure by money, the best attendance in the town. I do not think that I can do better service than a hundred others whom you may procure; and you will permit me to say, without seeking to displease you, that I will not attempt it."

I was not displeased at what she said, but it was not my policy to admit this. With an air almost of indignation, I replied:

"And you would leave my friend to perish?"

"I trust he will not perish—I sincerely trust he will continue in health while he remains here. I implore you, dear husband, to make no requisition such as this. I can not serve your friend in this capacity. I pray that he may not need it."

"But should he?"

"I can not serve him."

"Julia, you are a cold-hearted woman — you do not love me."

"Cold-hearted, Edward, cold-hearted? Not love you, Edward? — Oh, surely, you can not mean it. No! no! you can not!"

She threw herself into my arms, clasped me fondly in hers, and the warm tears from her eyes gushed into my bosom.

"Love me, love my dog — at least my friend!" I exclaimed, in austere accents, but without repulsing her. I could not repulse her. I had not strength to put her from me. The embrace was too dear; and the energy with which she rejected a suggestion in which I proposed only to try and test her, made her doubly dear at that moment to my bosom. Alas! how, in the attempt to torture others, do we torture ourselves! If I afflicted Julia in this scene, I am very sure that my own sufferings were more intense. One thing alone would have made them so. The *one* quality of evil, of the bad spirit which mingled in with *my* feelings, and did not trouble *hers*. But, just then I did not think her innocent altogether. I still had my doubts that her resistance to my wishes was simply meant to conceal that tendency in her own, the exposure of which she had naturally every reason to dread. The demon of the blind heart, though baffled for awhile, was still busy. Alas! he was not always to be baffled.

CHAPTER XLII.

CROSS PURPOSES.

WEEKS passed and still William Edgerton was a resident of M ——, and a constant guest at our little cottage. He had, in this time, effectually broken up the harmony and banished the peace which had previously prevailed there. The unhappy young man pursued the same insane course of conduct which had been productive of so much bitterness and trouble to us all before; and, under the influence of my evil demon, I adopted the same blind policy which had already been so fruitful of misery to myself and wife. I gave them constant opportunities together. I found my associates, and pursued my pastimes—pastimes indeed—away from home. Poetry and song were given up—we no longer wandered by the river-side, and upon the green heights of our sacred hill. My evenings were consumed in dreary rambles, alone with my own evil thoughts, and miserable fancies, or consumed with yellow-eyed watching, from porch or tree, upon those privacies of the suspected lovers, in which I had so shamefully indulged before. I felt the baseness of this vocation, but I had not the strength to give it up. I know there is no extenuation for it. I know that it was base! base! base! It is a point of conscience with me, not only to declare the truth, but to call things by the truest and most characteristic names. Let me do my understanding the justice to say that, even when I practised the meanness, I was not ignorant—not insensible of its character. It was the strength only—the courage to do right, and to forbear the wrong—in which I was deficient. It was the blind heart, not the unknowing head to which the shame was attributable, though the pang fell not unequally upon heart and head.

Meanwhile, Kingsley returned from Texas. He became my principal companion. We strolled together in my leisure hours by day. We sat and smoked together in his chamber by night. My blind fortitude may be estimated, when the reader is told that Kingsley professed to find me a very agreeable companion. He complimented me on my liveliness, my wit, my humor, and what not—and this, too, when I was all the while meditating, with the acutest feeling of apprehension, upon the very last wrong which the spirit of man is found willing to endure;—when I believed that the ruin of my house was at hand; when I believed that the ruin of my heart and hope had already taken place:—and when, hungering only for the necessary degree of proof which justice required before conviction, I was laying my gins and snares with the view to detecting the offenders, and consummating the last terrible but necessary work of vengeance! But Kingsley did not confine himself altogether to the language of compliment.

"Good fellow and good companion as you are, Clifford—and loath as I should be to give up these pleasant evenings, still I think you very wrong in one respect. You neglect your wife."

"Ha! ha! what an idea! You are not serious?"

"As a judge."

"Psha! She does not miss me."

"Perhaps not," he answered gravely—"but for your own sake if not for hers, it seems to me you should pursue a more domestic course."

"What mean you?"

"You leave your wife too much to herself!—nay—let me be frank—not too much to herself, for there would be little danger in that, but too much with that fellow Edgerton."

"What? You would not have me jealous, Kingsley?"

"No! Only prudent."

"You dislike Edgerton, Kingsley."

"I do! I frankly confess it. I think he wants manliness of character, and such a man always lacks sincerity. But I do not speak of him. I should utter the same opinion with respect to any other man, in similar circumstances. A wife is a dependent creature—apt to be weak!—If young, she is susceptible

—equally susceptible to the attentions of another and to the neglect of her husband. I do not say that such is the case with your wife. Far from it. I esteem her very much as a remarkable woman. But women were intended to be dependents. Most of them are governed by sensibilities rather than by principles. Impulse leads them and misleads. The wife finds herself neglected by the very man who, in particular, owes her duty. She finds herself entertained, served, watched, tended with sleepless solicitude, by another; one, not wanting either in personal charms and accomplishments, and having similar tastes and talents. What should be the result of this? Will she not become indifferent where she finds indifference—devoted where she finds devotion? A cunning fellow, like Edgerton, may, under these circumstances, rob a man of his wife's affections. Mark me, I do not say that he will do anything positively dishonorable, at least in the world's acceptation of the term. I do not intimate—I would not willingly believe—that she would submit to anything of the sort. I speak of the affections, not of the virtues. There is shame to the man in his wife's dishonor; but the misfortune of losing her affections is neither more nor less than the suffering without the shame. Look to it. I do not wish to prejudice your mind against Edgerton. Far from it. I have forborne to speak hitherto because I knew that my own mind was prejudiced against him. Even now I say nothing against *him*. What I say has reference to your conduct only. I do not think Edgerton a bad man. I think him a weak one. Weak as a woman—governed, like her, by impulse rather than by principle—easily led away—incapable of resisting where his affections are concerned—repenting soon, and sinning, in the same way, as fast as he repents. He is weak, very weak—washy-weak—he wants stamina, and, wanting that, wants principle!"

"Strange enough, if you should be right! How do you reconcile this opinion with his refusal to lend you money to game upon? He was governed in that by principle."

"Not a bit of it! He was governed by habit. He knew nothing of gambling—had heard his father always preaching against it—it was not a temptation with him. His tastes were of another sort. He could not be tried in that way. The very

fact that he was susceptible, in particular, to the charms of female society, saved him from the passion for gaming, as it would save him from the passion for drink. But the very tastes that saved him from one passion make him particularly susceptible to another. He can stand the temptation of play, but not that of women. Let him be tried *there*, and he falls! his principle would not save him—would not be worth a straw to a drowning man."

"You underrate—undervalue Edgerton. He has always been a true, generous friend of mine."

"Be it so! with that I have nothing to do. But friendship has its limits which it can not pass. Were Edgerton truly your friend, he would advise you as I have done. Nay, a proper sense of friendship and of delicacy would have kept him from paying that degree of attention to the wife which must be an hourly commentary on the neglect of her husband. I confess to you it was this very fact that made me resolve to speak to you."

"I thank you, my dear fellow, but I have nothing to fear. Poor Edgerton is dying—music and painting are his solace—they minister to his most active tastes. As for Julia, she is immaculate."

"I distrust neither; but you should not throw away your pearl, because you think it can not suffer stain."

"I do not throw it away."

"You do not sufficiently cherish it."

"What would you have me do—wear it constantly in my bosom?"

"No! not exactly that; but at least wear nothing else there so frequently or so closely as that."

"I do not. I fancy I am a very good husband. You shall not put me out of humor, Kingsley, either with my wife or myself. You shall not make me jealous. I am no Othello—I have no visitations of the moon."

And I laughed—laughed while speaking thus—though the keen pang was writhing at that moment like a burning arrow through my brain.

"I have no wish to make you jealous, Clifford, and I very much admire your superiority and strength. I congratulate you

on your singular freedom from this unhappy passion. But you may become too confident. You may lose your wife's affections by your neglect, when you might not lose them by treachery."

"You are grown a croaker, Kingsley, and I will leave you. I will go home. I will show you what a good husband I am, or can become."

"That's right; but smoke another cigar before you go."

"There it is!" I exclaimed, laughingly. "You blow hot and cold. You would have me go and stay."

"Take the cigar, at least, and smoke it as you go. My advice is good, and that it is honest you may infer from my reluctance to part with you. I will see you at the office at nine in the morning. There is some prospect of a compromise with Jeffords about the tract in Dallas, and he is to meet Wharton and myself at your law-shop to-morrow. It is important to make an arrangement with Jeffords—his example will be felt by Brownsell and Gibbon. We may escape a long-winded lawsuit, after all, to your great discomfiture and my gain. But you do not hear me!"

"Yes, yes, every word—you spoke of Jeffords, and Wharton, and Gibbon—yes, I heard you."

"Now I know that you did not hear me—not understandingly, at least. I should not be surprised if I have made you jealous. You look wild, *mon ami!*"

"Jealous, indeed! what nonsense!" and I prepared to depart when I had thus spoken.

"Well, at nine you must meet us at the office. My business must not suffer because you are jealous."

"Come, no more of that, Kingsley!"

"By heavens, you are touched."

He laughed merrily. I laughed also, but with a choking effort which almost cost me a convulsion as I left the tavern. The sport of Kingsley was my death. What he had said previously sunk deep into my soul. Not rightly—not as it should have sunk—showing me the folly of my own course without assuming, as I did, the inevitable wilfulness of the course of others; but actually confirming me in my fears—nay, making them grow hideous as *things* and substantive convictions. It seemed to me, from what Kingsley said, that I was already dishonored

—that the world already knew my shame; and that he, as my friend, had only employed an ambiguous language to soften the sting and the shock which his revelations must necessarily occasion. With this new notion, which occurred to me after leaving the house, I instantly returned to it. It required a strong effort to seem deliberate in what I spoke.

"Kingsley," I said, "perhaps I did not pay sufficient heed to your observations. Do you mean to convey to my mind the idea that people think Edgerton too familiar with my wife? Do you mean to say that such a notion is abroad? That there is anything wrong?"

"By no means."

"Ah! then there is nothing in it. I see no reason for suspicion. I am not a jealous man; but it becomes necessary when one's neighbors find occasion to look into one's business, to look a little into it one's self."

"One must not wait for that," said Kingsley; "but where is your cigar?"

The question confused me. I had dropped it in the agitation of my feelings, without being conscious of its loss.

"Take another," said he, with a smile, "and let your cares end in smoke as you wend homeward. My most profound thoughts come from my cigar. To that I look for my philosophy, my friendship, my love—almost my religion. A cigar is a brain-comforter, verily. You should smoke more, Clifford. You will grow better, wiser—*cooler*."

"I take your cigar and counsel together," was my reply. "The one shall reconcile me to the other. *Bon repos!*" And so I left him.

I was not likely to have *bon repos* myself. I was troubled. Kingsley suspects me of being jealous. Such an idea was very mortifying. This is another weakness of the suspicious nature. It loathes above all things to be suspected of jealousy. I hurried home, vexed with my want of coolness—doubly vexed at the belief that other eyes than my own were witnesses of the attentions of Edgerton to my wife.

I stopped at the entrance of our cottage. *He* was there as usual. Mrs. Porterfield was not present. The candle was burning dimly. He sat upon the sofa. Julia was seated upon

a chair at a little distance. Her features wore an expression of exceeding gravity. His were pale and sad, but his eyes burnt with an eager intensity that betrayed the passionate feeling in his heart. Thus they sat—she looking partly upon the floor—he looking at her. I observed them for more than ten minutes, and in all that time I do not believe they exchanged two sentences.

"Surely," I thought, "this must be a singularly sufficing passion which can enjoy itself in this manner without the help of language."

Of course, this reflection increased the strength of my suspicions. I became impatient, and entered the cottage. The eyes of Julia seemed to brighten at my appearance, but they were also full of sadness. Edgerton soon after rose and took his departure. I believe, if I had stayed away till midnight, he would have lingered until that time; but I also believe that if I had returned two hours before, he would have gone as soon. His passion for the wife seemed to produce an antipathy to the husband, quite as naturally as that which grew up in my bosom in regard to him. When he was gone, my wife approached me, almost vehemently exclaiming—

"Why, why do you leave me thus, Clifford? Surely you can not love me."

"Indeed I do; but I was with Kingsley. I had business, and did not suppose you would miss me."

"Why suppose otherwise, Edward? I do miss you. I beg that you will not leave me thus again."

"What do you mean? You are singularly earnest, Julia. What has happened? What has offended you? Was not Edgerton with you all the evening?"

My questions, coupled with my manner, which had been somewhat excited, seemed to alarm her. She replied hurriedly:—

"Nothing has happened! nothing has offended me! But I feel that you should not leave me thus. It does not look well. It looks as if you did not love me."

"Ah! but when you *know* that I do!"

"I do not know it. Oh, show me that you do, Edward. Stay with me as you did at first—when we first came here—

when we were first married. Then we were so—so happy!"

"You would not say that you are not happy now?"

"I am not! I do not see you as I wish—when I wish! You leave me so often—leave me to strangers, and seem so indifferent. Oh! Edward, do not let me think that you care for me no longer."

"Strangers! Why, how you talk!—Good old Mrs. Porterfield seems to me like my own grandmother, and Edgerton has been my friend——"

Did I really hear her say the single word,

"Friend!" and with such an accent! The sound was a very slight one—it may have been my fancy only;—and she turned away a moment after. What could it mean? I was bewildered. I followed her to the chamber. I endeavored to renew the subject in such a manner as not to offend her suspicions, but she seemed to have taken the alarm. She answered me in monosyllables only, and without satisfying the curiosity which that single word, doubtfully uttered, had so singularly awakened.

"Only love me—love me, Edward, and keep with me, and I will not complain. But if you leave me—if you neglect me—I am desolate!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

ACCIDENT AND MORE AGONIES.

THERE was something very unaccountable in all this. I say unaccountable, with the distinct understanding that it was unaccountable only to that obtuse condition of mind which is produced by the demon of the blind heart. My difficulties of judging were only temporary, however. The sinister spirit made his whisper conclusive in the end.

"This vehemence," it suggested, "which is so unwonted with her, is evidently unnatural. It is affected for an object. What is that object? It is the ordinary one with persons in the wrong, who always affect one extreme of feeling when they would conceal another. She fears that you will suspect that she is very well satisfied in your absence; accordingly she strives to convince you that she was never so dissatisfied. Of course you can not believe that a man so well endowed as Edgerton, so graceful, having such fine tastes and accomplishments, can prove other than an agreeable companion! What then should be your belief?"

There was a devilish ingenuity in this sort of perversion. It had its effect. I believed it; and believing it, revolted, with a feeling of hate and horror, at the supposed loathsome hypocrisy of that fond embrace, and those earnest pleadings, which, in the moment of their first display, had seemed so precious to my soul. In the morning, when I was setting forth from home, she put her arm on my shoulder:—

"Come home soon, Edward, and let us go together on the hill. Let nobody know. Surely we shall be company enough

for each other. I will sketch you a view of the river while you read Wordsworth to me."

"Now," whispered my demon in my ears, "that is ingenious. Let nobody know; as if, having a friend in the neighborhood—on a visit—he sick and in bad spirits—you should propose to yourself a pleasure trip of any kind without inviting him to partake of it? She knows *that* to be out of the question, and that you must ask Edgerton if you resolve to go yourself."

Such was the artful suggestion of my familiar. My resolve—still recognising the cruel policy by which I had been so long governed—was instantly taken. This was to invite Edgerton and Kingsley both.

"I will give them every opportunity. While Kingsley and myself ramble together, well leave this devoted pair to their own cogitations, taking care, however, to see what comes of them."

I promised Julia to be home in season, but said nothing of my intention to ask the gentlemen. She thanked me with a look and smile, which, had I not seen all things through eyes of the most jaundiced green, would have seemed to me that of an angel, expressive only of the truest love.

"Ah! could I but believe!" was the bitter self-murmur of my soul, as I left the threshold.

On my way through the town I stopped at the postoffice to get letters, and received one from Mrs. Delaney—late Clifford—my wife's exemplary mother, addressed to Julia. I then proceeded to Edgerton's lodgings. He was not yet up, and I saw him in his chamber. His flute lay upon the toilet. Seeing it, I recalled, with all its original vexing bitterness, the scene which took place the night previous to my departure from my late home. And when I looked on Edgerton—saw with what effort he spoke, and how timidly he expressed himself—how reluctant were his eyes to meet the gaze of mine—his guilt seemed equally fresh and unequivocal. I marked him out, involuntarily, as my victim. I felt assured, even while conveying to him the complimentary invitation which I bore, that my hand was commissioned to do the work of death upon his limbs. Strange and fascinating conviction! But I did not contemplate this necessity with any pleasure. No! I would have prayed—I did pray—that the task might be spared me. If I thought

of it at all, it was as the agent of a necessity which I could not countervail. The fates had me in their keeping. I was the blind instrument obeying the inflexible will, against which

"Reluctant nature strives in vain."

I felt then, most truly, though I deceived myself, that I had no power, though every disposition, to save and to spare. I conveyed my invitation as a message from my wife.

"Edgerton, my wife has planned a little ramble for this afternoon. She wishes to show you some of the beauties of landscape in our new abode. She commissions me to ask you to join us."

"Ah! did *she?*" he demanded eagerly, with a slight emphasis on the last word.

"Ay, did she! Will you come?"

"Certainly — with pleasure!"

He need not have said so much. The pleasure spoke in his bright eyes — in the tremulous hurry of his utterance. I turned away from him, lest I should betray the angry feeling which disturbed me. He did not seek to arrest my departure. He had few words. It was sufficiently evident that he shrunk from my glance and trembled in my presence. How far otherwise, in the days of our mutual innocence — in our days of boyhood — when his face seemed clear like that of a pure, perfect star, shining out in the blue serene of night, unconscious of a cloud.

Kingsley was already at my office when I reached it, and soon after came Mr. Wharton, followed by two of our opponents. We were engaged with them the better part of the morning. When the business hours were consumed, our transactions remained unfinished, and another meeting was appointed for the ensuing day. I invited Wharton as well as Kingsley to join us in our afternoon rambles, which they both promised to do. I went home something sooner to make preparations, and only recollected, on seeing Julia, that I had thrown the letter from her mother, with other papers, into my desk. When I told her of the letter, her countenance changed to a death-like paleness which instantly attracted my notice.

"What is the matter — are you sick, Julia?"

"No! nothing. But the letter — where is it?"

"I threw it on my table, or in my desk, with other papers, to have them out of the way; and hurrying home sooner than usual, forgot to bring it with me. I suppose there's nothing in it of any importance?"

"No, nothing, I suppose," she answered faintly.

I told her what I had done with respect to our guests.

"I am very sorry," she answered, "that you have done so. I do not feel like company, and wished to have you all to myself."

"Oh, selfish; but of this I will believe moderately! As for company, with the exception of Wharton, they are old friends; and it would not do to take a pleasure ramble, with poor Edgerton here, and not make him a party."

There was an earnest intensity of gaze, almost amounting to a painful stare, in Julia's eyes, as I said these words. She really seemed distressed.

"But really, Edward, our pleasure ramble is not such a one as would make it a duty to invite your friends. How difficult it seems for you to understand me. Could not we two stroll a piece into the woods without having witnesses?"

"Why, is that all? Why then should you have made a formal appointment for such a purpose? Could we not have gone as before—without premeditation?"

The question puzzled her. She looked anxious. Had she answered with sincerity—with truth—and could I have believed her to have been sincere, how easy would it have been to have settled our difficulties. Had she said—"I really wish to avoid Mr. Edgerton, whose presence annoys me—who will be sure to come—when you are sure to be gone—and whom I have particular reasons to wish not to meet—not to see."

This, which might be the truth, she did not dare to speak. She had her reasons for her apprehension. This, which was reasonable enough, I could not conjecture; for the demon of the blind heart was too busy in suggesting other conjectures. It was evident enough that she had secret motives for her course, which she did not venture to reveal to me; and nothing could be more natural, in the diseased state of my mind, than that I should give the worst colorings to these motives in the conjec-

tures which I made upon them. We were destined to play at cross-purposes much longer, and with more serious issues.

Our friends came, and we set forth in the pleasant part of the afternoon. We ascended our hill, and resting awhile upon the summit, surveyed the prospect from that position. Then I conducted the party through some of our woodland walks, which Julia and myself had explored together. But I soon gave up the part of cicerone to Wharton, who was to the "*manor born.*" He was a native of the neighborhood, boasted that he knew every "bosky dell of this wild wood" and certainly conducted us to glimpses of prettiest heights, and groves, and far vistas, where the light seemed to glide before us in an embodied gray form, that stole away, and peeped backward upon us from long allies of the darkest and most solemn-sighted pines.

'But there is a finer spot just below us," he said—"a creek that is like no other that I have ever met with in the neighborhood. It is formed by the Alabama—is as deep in some places, and so narrow, at times, that a spry lad can easily leap across it."

"Is it far?"

"No—a mile only."

"But your wife may be fatigued, Clifford?" was the sugges tion of Kingsley. She certainly looked so; but I answered for her, and insisted otherwise. I met her glance as I spoke, but, though she looked dissatisfaction, her lips expressed none. I could easily conjecture that she felt none. She was walking with Edgerton—and while all eyes watched the scenery, he watched her alone. I hurried forward with Kingsley, but he immediately fell behind, loitered on very slowly, and left Wharton and myself to proceed together. I could comprehend the meaning of this. My demon made his suggestion.

"Kingsley suspects them—he sees what you are unwilling to see—he is not so willing to leave them together."

We reached the stream, and wandered along its banks. It had some unusual characteristics. It was sometimes a creek, deep and narrow, but clear; a few steps farther and it became what, in the speech of the country, is called a branch; shallow, purling soft over a sand-bed, limpid yellow, and with a playful prattle that put one in mind of the songs of thoughtless chil-

dren, humming idly as they go. The shrubbery along its edges seemed to follow its changes. Where the bluffs were high, the foliage was dense and the trees large. The places where its waters shallowed, were only dotted with shrub trees and wild vines, which sometimes clambered across the stream and wedded the opposing branches, in bonds as hard to break as those of matrimony. The waters were sinuous, and therefore slow. They seemed only to glide along, like some glittering serpent, who trails at leisure his silvery garments through the woods. quietly and slow, as if he had no sort of apprehension.

When we had reached a higher spot of bluff than the rest, Wharton, who was an active rather than an athletic man, challenged me to follow him. He made the leap having little space to spare. I had not done such a thing for some years. But my boyhood had been one of daring. The school in which I had grown up had given me bodily hardihood and elasticity; at all events I could not brook defiance in such a matter, and, with moderate effort, succeeded in making a longer stride. I looked back at this moment and saw Julia, still closely attended by Edgerton, just about emerging into view from a thick copse that skirted the foot of a small hill over which our course had brought us. I could not distinguish their features. They were, however, close together. Kingsley was on their right, a little in advance of them, but still walking slowly. I pointed my finger toward a shallow and narrow part of the stream as that which they would find it most easy to cross. A tree had been felled at the designated point, and just below it, in consequence of the obstructions which its limbs presented to the easy passage of the water, several sand bars had been made, by which, stepping from one to the other, one might cross dryshod even without the aid of the tree. Kingsley repeated my signal to those behind him, and led the way. I went on with Wharton, without again looking behind me.

But few minutes had elapsed after this, when I heard Julia scream in sudden terror. I looked round, but the foliage had thickened behind me, and I could no longer see the parties. I bounded backward, with no enviable feelings. My apprehensions for my wife's safety made me forgetful of my suspicions. I reached the spot in time to discover the cause of her alarm.

She was in the midst of the stream, standing upon one of the sandflats, steadying herself with difficulty, while she supported the whole form of William Edgerton, who lay, seemingly lifeless, and half buried in one of the sluices of water which ran between the sandrifts. I had just time to see this, and to feel all the pangs of my jealousy renewed, when Kingsley rushed into the water to his rescue. He lifted him out to the banks as if he had been an infant, and laid him on the shore. I went to the relief of Julia, who, trembling like a leaf, fainted in my arms the moment she felt herself in safety.

The whole affair was at that time unaccountable to me. It necessarily served to increase my pangs. Had I not seen her with my own eyes tenderly supporting the fainting frame of the man whom I believed to be my rival—whom I believed she loved? Had I not heard her scream of terror announcing her interest in his fate—her apprehensions for his safety? His danger had made her forgetful of her caution—such was the assurance of my demon—and in the fullne s of her heart her voice found utterance. Besides, how was I to know what endearments—what fond pressure of palms—had been passing between them, making them heedless of their course, and consequently, making them liable to the accident which had occurred. For, it must be remembered, that the general impression was that Edgerton's foot had slipped, and, falling into the stream while endeavoring to assist Julia, he had nearly pulled her in after him. His fainting afterward we ascribed to the same nervous weakness which had induced that of Julia. On this head, however, Kingsley was better informed. He told me, in a subsequent conversation, that he had narrowly observed the parties—that, until the moment before he fell, the hands of the two had not met—that then, Edgerton offered his to assist my wife over the stream, and scarcely had their fingers touched, when Edgerton sank down, like a stone, seemingly lifeless, and falling into the water only after he had become insensible.

All was confusion. Mine, however, was not confusion. It was commotion—commotion which I yet suppressed—a volcano smothered, but smothered only for a time, and ready to break forth with superior fury in consequence of the restraint put upon it. This one event, with the impressive spectacle of

the parties in such close juxtaposition, seemed almost to render every previous suspicion conclusive.

Julia was soon recovered; but the swoon of Edgerton was of much longer duration. We sprinkled him with water, subjected him to fanning and friction, and at length aroused him. His mind seemed to wander at his first consciousness—he murmured incoherently. One or two broken sentences, however, which he spoke, were not without significance in my ears.

"Closer! closer! leave me not now—not yet."

I bent over him to catch the words. Kingsley, as if he feared the utterance of anything more, pushed me away, and addressing Edgerton sternly, asked him if he felt pain.

"What hurts you, Mr. Edgerton? Where is your pain?"

The harsh and very loud tones which he employed, had the effect which I have no doubt he intended. The other came to complete consciousness in a moment.

"Pain!" said he—"no! I feel no pain. I feel feeble only."

And he strove to rise from the ground as he spoke.

"Do not attempt it," said Kingsley—"you are not able. Wharton, my good fellow, will you run back to town, and bring a carriage?"

"It will not need," said Edgerton, striving again to rise, and staggering up with difficulty.

"It will need. You must not overtask yourself. The walk is a long one before us."

Meantime, Wharton was already on his way. It was a tedious interval which followed, before his return with the carriage, which found considerable difficulty in picking a track through the woods. Julia, after recovery, had wandered off about a hundred yards from the party. She betrayed no concern—no uneasiness—made no inquiries after Edgerton, of whose condition she knew nothing—and, by this very course, convinced me that she was conscious of too deep an interest in his fate to trust her lips in referring to it. All that she said to me was, that "she had been so terrified on seeing him fall, that she did not even know that she had screamed."

"Natural enough!" said my demon. "Had she been able to have controlled her utterance, she would have taken precious

good care to have maintained the silence of the grave. But her feelings were too strong for her policy."

And I took this reasoning for gospel.

The carriage came. Edgerton was put into it, but Julia positively refused to ride. She insisted that she was perfectly equal to the walk and walk she would. I was pleased with this determination, but not willing to appear pleased. I expostulated with her even angrily, but found her incorrigible. Chagrin and disappointment were obvious enough on the face of William Edgerton

I took my seat beside him, and left Kingsley and Wharton to escort my wife home. We had scarcely got in motion before a rash determination seized my mind.

"You must go home with me, Edgerton. It will not do, while you are in this feeble state, to remain at a public tavern."

He said something very faintly about crowding and inconveniencing us.

"Pshaw—room enough—and Julia can be your nurse."

His eyes closed, he sunk back in the carriage, and a deep sigh escaped him. I fancied that he had a second time fainted; but I soon discovered that his faintness was simply the sudden sense of an overcoming pleasure. I knit my teeth spasmodically together; I cursed him in the bitterness of my heart, but said nothing. It was a feeling of desperation that had prompted the rash resolution which I had taken.

"At least," I muttered to myself, "it will bring these damning doubts to a final trial. If they have been fools heretofore, opportunity will serve to madden them. We shall see—we shall know all very soon;—and then!—"

Ay, then!

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE DAMNING LETTER.

MRS. PORTERFIELD, good old lady, half blind, half deaf, infirm and gouty, but very good natured, easily complied with my request to accommodate my friend. My friend!—She soon put one of her bed-rooms in order, and Edgerton was in quiet possession of it sometime before the pedestrians came home. When my wife was told of what I had done, she was perfectly aghast. Her air of chagrin was well put on and excellently worn. But she said nothing. Kingsley wore a face of unusual gravity.

"You are either the most wilful or the most indifferent husband in the world," was his whispered remark to me as he bade me good night, refusing to remain for supper.

I said something to my wife about tending Edgerton—seeing to his wants—nursing him if he remained unwell, and so forth. She looked at me with a face of intense sadness, but made no reply.

"She is too happy for speech," said my demon; "and such faces are easily made for such an occasion."

I went in to Edgerton after a brief space; I found him feeble, complaining of chill. His hands felt feverish. I advised quiet and sent off for a physician. I sat with him until the physician came, but I observed that my presence seemed irksome to him. He answered me in monosyllables only; his eyes, meanwhile, being averted, his countenance that of one excessively weary and impatient for release. The physician prescribed and left him, as I did myself. I thought he needed repose and desired to be alone. To my great surprise he followed me in less than half an hour into the supper-room, where he stubbornly sat out

the evening. He refused to take the physic prescribed for him and really did not now appear to need it. His eyes were lighted up with unusual animation, his cheeks had an improved color, and without engaging very actively in the conversation, what he said was said with a degree of spirit quite uncommon with him during the latter days of our intimacy.

Mr. Wharton spent the evening with us, and the ball of talk was chiefly sustained by him and myself. My wife said little, nothing save when spoken to, and wore a countenance of greater gravity than ever. It seemed that Edgerton made some effort to avoid any particularity in his manner, yet seldom did I turn my eyes without detecting his in keen examination of my wife's countenance. At such times, his glance usually fell to the ground, but toward the close of evening, he almost seemed to despise observation, or—which was more probable—was not conscious of it—for his gaze became fixed with a religious earnestness, which no look of mine could possibly divert or unfix. He solicited my wife to play on the guitar, but she declined, until requested by Mrs. Porterfield, when she took up the instrument passively, and sung to it one of those ordinary negro-songs which are now so shockingly popular. I was surprised at this, for I well knew that she heartily detested the taste and spirit in which such things were conceived. Under the tuition of my demon, I immediately assumed this to be another proof of the decline of her delicacy. And yet, though I did not think of this at the time, she might have employed the coarse effusion simply as an antidote against the predominance of a morbid sentimentalism. There is a moment in the history of the heart's suffering, when the smallest utterance of the lips, or movement of the form, or expression of the eye, is prompted by some prevailing policy—some motive which the excited sensibilities deem of importance to their desires.

She retired soon. Her departure was followed by that of Edgerton first, and next of Wharton. Mrs. Porterfield had already gone. I was alone at the entrance of our cottage. Not alone! My demon was with me—suggestive of his pangs as ever—full of subtlety, and filling me with the darkest imaginings. The destroyer of my peace was in my dwelling. My wife may or may not be innocent. Happy for her if she is, but how can that

be known? It mattered little to me in the excited mood which possessed me. Let any man fancy, as I did, that one, partaking of his hospitality, lying in the chamber which adjoined his own, yet meditated the last injury in the power of man to inflict against the peace and honor of his protector. Let him fancy this, and then ask what would be his own feelings—what his course?

Still, there is a sentiment of justice which is natural to every bosom with whom education has not been utter perversion. I believed much against Edgerton; I suspected my wife; I had seen much to offend my affections; much to alarm my fears; yet I *knew* nothing which was conclusive. That last event, the occurrence of the afternoon, seemed to prove not that the two were guilty, but that my wife loved the man who meditated guilt. This belief, doubtful so long, and against which I had really striven, seemed now to be concluded. I had heard her scream; I had seen her tenderly sustaining his form; I had felt her emotions, when, the danger being over, her feminine nature gained the ascendancy and she fainted in my arms. I could no longer doubt, that if she was still pure in mind, she was no longer insensible to a passion which must lessen that purity with every added moment of its permitted exercise. Still, even with this conviction, something more was necessary to justify me in what I designed. There must be no doubt. I must see. I must have sufficient proof, for, as my vengeance shall be unsparing, my provocation must be complete. That it might be so I had brought Edgerton into the house. Something more was necessary. Time and opportunity must be allowed him. This I insisted on, though, more than once, as I walked under the dark whispering groves which girdled our cottage, and caught a glimpse of the light in Edgerton's chamber, my demon urged me to go in and strangle him. I had strength to resist this suggestion, but the struggle was a long one.

I did not soon retire to rest. When I did, I still remained sleepless. But Julia slept. In her sleep she threw herself on my bosom, and seemed to cling about and clasp me as if with some fear of separation. Had I not fancied that this close embrace was meant for another than myself, I had been more indulgent to the occasional moanings of distress that escaped her

lips. But, thinking as I did, I forced her from me, and in doing so she wakened.

"Edward," she exclaimed on wakening, "is it you?"

"Who should it be?" I demanded—all my suspicions renewed by her question.

"I am so glad. I have had such a dream. Oh! Edward, I dreamed that you were killing me!"

"Ha! what could have occasioned such a dream?"

My demon suggested, at this moment, that her dream had been occasioned by a consciousness of what her guilty fancies deserved. But she replied promptly:—

"Nay, I know not. It was the strangest fancy. I thought that you pursued me along the river—that my foot slipped and I fell among the bushes, where you caught me, and it was just when you were strangling me that I wakened."

"Your dream was occasioned by the affair of the afternoon. Was nobody present but ourselves?"

"Yes—there was a man at a little distance beyond us, and he seemed to be running from you also."

"A man! who was he?"

"I don't know exactly—his back was turned, but it seemed as if it was Mr. Edgerton."

"Ha! Mr. Edgerton!"

A deep silence followed. She had spoken her reply firmly, but so slowly as to convince me of the mental reluctance which she felt in uttering this part of the dream. When the imagination is excited, how small are the events that confirm its ascendency, and stimulate its progress. This dream seemed to me as significant as any of the signs that informed the ancient augurs It bore me irresistibly forward in the direction of my previous thoughts. I began to see the path—dark, dismal—perhaps bloody—which lay before me. I began to feel the deed, already in my soul, which destiny was about to require me to perform. A crime, half meditated, is already half committed. This is the danger of brooding upon the precipice of evil thoughts. A moment's dizziness—a single plunge—and all is over!

I doubt whether Julia slept much the remainder of the night I know that I did not. She had her consciousness as well as

mine. *That* I now know. The question—"was her consciousness a guilty one?" That was the only question which remained for me!

The next morning I saw Edgerton. He looked quite as well as on the previous night, but professed to feel otherwise—declined coming forth to breakfast, and begged me to send the physician to him on my way to the office. I immediately conjectured that this was mere practice, for he had not taken the medicine which had been prescribed.

He must keep sick to keep *here*," said my demon. "He can have no pretext, otherwise, to stay!"

When I was about to leave the house Julia followed me to the door.

"Don't forget to bring mother's letter with you," was her parting direction. I had not been half an hour at the office before a little servant-girl, who tended in the house, came to me with a message from her, requesting that the letter might be sent by her.

This earnestness struck me with surprise. I remembered the expression in my wife's face the day before when I told her the letter had been received. I now recalled to mind the fact, that, on no occasion, had she ever shown me any of her mother's letters; though nothing surely would have seemed more natural, as she knew how keen was my anxiety to hear at all times from the old maternal city.

My suspicions began to warm, and I resolved upon another act of baseness in obedience to the counsel of my evil spirit. I pretended to look awhile for the letter, but finally dismissed the girl, saying that I had mislaid it, but would bring it home with me when I came to dinner. The moment she had gone I examined this precious document. It was sealed with one of those gum wafers which are stuck on the outside of the envelope. In turning it over, as if everything was prepared to gratify my wish, I discovered that one section of the wafer had nearly parted from the paper. To the upper section of the fold it adhered closely. To the lower it was scarcely attached at all, and seemed never to have been as well fastened as the upper.

The temptation was irresistible. A very slight effort enabled

me to complete the separation without soiling the paper or fracturing the seal. This was all done within my desk, the leaf of the desk being raised and resting upon my head. In this position I could easily close the desk, in the event of any intrusion, without suffering the intruder to see in what I had been engaged. Thus guarded I proceeded to read the precious epistle, which I found very much what I should have expected from such a woman. It said a great deal about her neighbors and her neighbors' dresses; and how her dear Delaney was sometimes "obstropolous," though in the end a mighty good man; and much more over which I hurried with all the rapidity of disgust. But there was matter that made me linger. One or two sentences thrown into the postscript contained a volume. I read, with lifted hair and a convulsed bosom, the following passage:—

"Delaney tells me that Bill Edgerton has gone to travel. He says to Tennessee. But I know better. I know he can't keep from you, let him try his best. But be on your guard, Julia. Don't let him get too free. Your husband's a jealous man, and if he was once to dream of the truth, he'd just as leave shoot him as look at him. I thought at one time he'd have guessed the truth before. So far you've played your cards nicely, but that was when I was by you, to tell you how. I feel quite ticklish when I think of you, and remember you've got nobody now to consult with. All I can say is, keep close. It would be the most terrible thing if Clifford should find out or even suspect. He wouldn't spare either of you. It's better for a woman in this country to drag on and be wretched, than to expose herself to shame, for no one cares for her after that. Be sure and burn this the moment you've read it. I would not have it seen for the world. I only write it as a matter of duty, for I can't forget that I'm your mother, though I must say, Julia, there were times when you have not acted the part of a daughter."

Precious, voluminous postscript! Considerate mother! "Be on your guard, Julia. Don't let him get too free!" Prudent, motherly counsel! "You've played your cards nicely." Nice lady! "I feel quite ticklish!" Elegant sensibilities!

Enough! The evil was done. Here was another piece o

damning testimony, indirect but conclusive, to show that I was bedevilled. I refolded the letter, but I could not place my lips to the wafer. The very letter seemed to breathe of poison. Faugh! I put it from me, went to the basin, and wetting the end of my finger, sufficiently softened the gum to make it more effectually fasten the letter than when I had received it. This done, I proceeded to the business of the day with what appetite was left me.

CHAPTER XLV.

VERGE OF THE PRECIPICE.

I DO not know how I got through with the business of that day. Even in my weakness I was possessed of a singular degree of strength. I saw Kingsley, Wharton, and all of the parties whom we met the day before. We came to a final decision on the subject of Kingsley's claims; I took down the heads of several papers which were to be drawn up; the terms of sale and transfer, bounds and characteristics of the land to be conveyed; and engaged in the discussion of the various topics which were involved in these transactions, with as keen a sense of business, I suspect, as any among them. The habit of suppressing my feelings availed me sufficiently under the present circumstances. Kingsley said nothing on the subject of yesterday's adventure, nor was I in the mood to refer to it. With some effort I was cheerful; spoke freely of indifferent topics, and pleased myself with the idea of my own firmness, while persuading my hearers of my good humor and my legal ability. I do not deny that I paid for these proofs of stoicism. Who does not? There is no such thing as suppressing passions which are already in action — at least, there is no such thing as suppressing them long. If the summer tempest keeps off to-day it will come to-morrow, and its force and volume is always in due proportion to the delay in its utterance. The solitudes of the forest heard my groans and agonies when man did not — and the venom which I kept from my lips, overflowed and poisoned the very sources of life and happiness within my heart.

I gave the letter to Julia without a word. She did not look

at me while extending the hand to receive it, and hurried to her chamber without breaking the seal. I watched her departing form with a vague, painful emotion of inquiry, such as would possess the bosom of one, looking on a dear object, with whom he felt that a disruption was hourly threatened of every earthly tie. That day she ate no dinner. Her brow was clouded throughout the meal. Edgerton was present, seemingly as well as at his first arrival. I had learned casually from Mrs. Porterfield that he had been in our little parlor all the morning; while another remark from the good old lady gave me a new idea of the employment of my wife.

"This writing," said she, addressing the latter, "does your eyes no good. Indeed they look as if you had been crying over your task."

"What writing?" I asked, looking at Julia, She blushed, but said nothing, and the blush passed off, leaving the sadness more distinct than ever.

"Oh, she has been writing whole sheets for the last two mornings. I went in this morning to bring her out to assist me in entertaining Mr. Edgerton, who looked so lonesome; and I do assure you I thought at first, from the quantity of writing, that you had given her some of your law-papers to do. The table was covered with it."

"Indeed!" said I—"this must be looked into. It will not do for the wife to take the husband's business from him. It looks mischievous, Mrs. Porterfield—there's something wrong about it."

"Indeed there must be, Mr. Clifford, for only see how very sad it makes her. I declare, she looks this last few weeks like a very different woman. She does nothing now but mope. When she first came here she seemed to me so cheerful and happy."

All this was so much additional wormwood to my bitter. The change in Julia, which had even struck this blind old lady, corresponded exactly with the date of Edgerton's arrival. When I saw the earnest tenderness in his countenance as he watched her, while Mrs. Porterfield was speaking, I ceased to feel any sympathy for the intense sadness which I yet could not but see in hers. I turned away, and leaving the table soon after, went

to our chamber, but the traces of writing were no longer to be seen. The voluminous manuscripts had all been carefully removed. I was about to leave the chamber when Julia met me at the door.

"Come back; sit with me," she said. "Why do you go off in such a hurry always? Once it was not so, Edward."

"What! are you for the honeymoon again?"

"Do not smile so, and speak so irreverently!" she said, with a reproachful earnestness that certainly seemed to me very strange, thinking of her as I did. My evil spirit was silent. He lacked readiness to account for it. But he was not unadroit, and moved me to change the ground.

"But what long writing is this, Julia?"

"Ah! you are curious?"

"Scarcely."

"*Tell* me that you are?"

"What! at the expense of truth?"

"No! but to gratify my desire. I hoped you were; but, curious or not, it is for you."

"Let me see it, then."

"Not yet; it is not ready."

"What! shall there be more of it?"

"Yes, a good deal."

"Indeed! but why take this labor? Why not tell me what you have to say?"

"I wish I could, but I can not. You do not encourage me."

"What encouragement do you wish to speak to your husband?"

"Oh, much! Stay with me, dear husband."

"That will keep you from your writing."

"Ah! perhaps it will render it unnecessary."

"At all events it will keep me from mine;" and I prepared to go. She put her hand upon my shoulder—looked into my eyes pleadingly—hers were dewy wet—and spoke:—

"Do not go—stay with me, dear husband, do stay. Stay only for half an hour."

Why did I not stay? I should ask that question of myself in vain. When the heart grows perverse, it acquires a taste for wilfulness. I, myself, longed to stay; could I have been per-

suaded that she certainly desired it, I should have found my sweetest pleasure in remaining. But there was the rub—that doubt! all that she said, looked, did, seemed, through the medium of the blind heart, to be fraudulent.

"She would disguise her anxiety, that you should be gone. Leave her, and in twenty minutes she and Edgerton will be together."

Such was the whisper of my demon. I did leave her. I went forth for an hour into the woods—returned suddenly and found them together! They were playing chess, Mrs. Porterfield, with all her spectacles, watching the game. I did not ask, and did not know, till afterward, that the express solicitation of the old lady had drawn her from her chamber, and placed her at the table. The conjecture of the evil spirit proved so far correct, and this increased my confidence in his whispers. Alas! how readily do we yield our faith to the spirit of hate! how slow to believe the pure and gentle assurances of love!

Three days passed after this fashion. Edgerton no longer expressed indisposition, yet he made no offer to depart. I took care that neither word nor action should remind him of his trespass. I gave the parties every opportunity, and exhibited the manner of an indifference which was free from all disquiet—all suspicion. The sadness, meanwhile, increased upon the countenance of Julia. She gazed at me in particular with a look of earnestness amounting to distress. This I ascribed to the strength of her passions. There was even at moments a harshness in her tones when addressing me now, which was unusual to her. I found some reason for this, equally unfavorable to her fidelity. After dinner I said to Edgerton:—

"You are scarcely strong enough for a bout at the bottle. I take wine with Kingsley this afternoon. He has commissioned me to ask you."

"I dare not venture, but that should not keep you away."

"It will not," I said indifferently.

"Thank him for me, if you please, but tell him it will not do for one so much an invalid as myself."

"Very good!" and I left him, and joined Kingsley. The business of this friend being now in a fair train for final adjustment, he was preparing for his return to Texas. He had not

been at my lodgings since Edgerton's arrival in M——, but we had seen each other, nevertheless, almost every day at his or at my office. Our afternoon was rather merry than cheerful. Heaven knows I was in no mood to be a *bon compagnon*, but I took sufficient pains that Kingsley should not suspect I had any reasons for being otherwise. I had my jest—I emptied my bottle—I said my good things, and seemed to say them without effort. Kingsley, always cheerful and strong-minded, was in his best vein, and mingling wit and reflection happily together, maintained the ball of conversation with equal ease and felicity. He had the happy knack of saying happy things quietly—of waiting for, and returning the ball, without running after it. At another time, I should have been content simply to have provoked him. Now, I was quite too miserable not to seek employment; and to disguise feelings, which I should have been ashamed to expose, I contrived to take the lead and almost grew voluble in the frequency of my utterance. Perhaps, if Kingsley failed in any respect as a philosopher, it was in forbearing to look with sufficient keenness of observation into the heart of his neighbor. He evidently did not see into mine. He was deceived by my manner. He credited all my fun to good faith, and gravely pronounced me to be a fortunate fellow.

"How?" I demanded with a momentary cessation of the jest. His gravity and—to me—the strange error in such an observation—excited my curiosity.

"In your freedom from jealousy."

"Oh! that, eh? But why should I be jealous?"

"It is not exactly why a man should be jealous—but why, knowing what men are, usually, that you are not. Nine men in ten would be so under your circumstances?"

"How, what circumstances?"

"With Edgerton in your house—evidently fond of your wife, you leave them utterly to themselves. You bring him into your house unnecessarily, and give him every opportunity. I still think you risk everything imprudently. You may pay for it."

I felt a strange sickness at my heart. I felt that the flame was beginning to boil up within me. The perilous turning-point of passion—the crisis of strength and endurance—was at hand.

My eyes settled gloomily upon the table. I was silent longer than usual. I felt *that*, and looked up. The keen glance of Kingsley was upon me. It would not do to suffer him to read my feelings. I replied with some precipitation:—

"I see, Kingsley, you are not cured of your prejudices against Edgerton."

"I am not—I have seen nothing to cure me. But my prejudice against him, has nothing to do with my opinion of your prudence. Were it any other man, the case would be the same."

"Well, but I do not think it so clear that Edgerton loves my wife more than is natural and proper."

"Of the naturalness of his love I say nothing—perhaps, nothing could be more natural. But that he does love her, and loves her as no married woman should be loved, by another than her husband, is clear enough."

"Suppose, then, it be as you say! So long as he does nothing improperly, there is nothing to be said. There is no evil."

"Ah, but there is evil. There is danger."

"How? I do not see."

"Suppose your wife makes the same discovery which other persons have made? Suppose she finds out that Edgerton loves her?"

"Well—what then?"

"She can not remain uninfluenced by it. It will affect her feelings sensibly in some way. No creature in the world can remain insensible to the attachment of another."

"Indeed! Why, agreeable to that doctrine, there could be no security from principle. There could be no virtue certain—nay, not even love."

"Do not mistake me. When I say *she* would be influenced—I do not mean to say that she would be so influenced as to requite the illicit sentiment. Far from it. But she must pity or she must scorn. She may despise or she may deplore. In either case her feelings would be aroused, and in either case would produce uneasiness if not unhappiness. I *know*, Clifford, that your wife perceives the passion of Edgerton—I am confident, also, that it has influenced her feelings. What may be the sentiment produced by this influence I do not pretend to

say. I would not insinuate that it is more than would be natural to the breast of any virtuous woman. She may pity or she may scorn—she may despise or she may deplore. I know not. But, in either case, I regard your bringing Edgerton into the house and conferring upon him so many opportunities, as being calculated either to make yourself or your wife miserable. In either event you have done wrong. Look to it—remedy it as soon as you can."

My face burned like fire. My eyes were fixed upon the table. I dared not look upon my companion. When I spoke, I felt a choking difficulty in my utterance which compelled me to speak loud to be understood, and which yet left my speech thick, husky, and unnatural.

"Say no more, Kingsley. What you have said disturbs me. Nay, I acknowledge, I have been disturbed before. Perhaps, indeed, I know more than yourself. Time will show. At all events, be sure of one thing. These opportunities, if what you say be true, afford an ordeal through which it is necessary that the parties should now go—if it be only to afford the necessary degree of relief to my mind. Enough has been seen to excite suspicion—enough has been done, you yourself think, to awaken the feelings of my wife. Those feelings must now be tried. Opportunity will do this. She must go through the trial. I am not blind as you suppose. Nay, I am watchful, and I tell you, Kingsley, that the time approaches when all my doubts must cease one way or the other."

"But I still think, Clifford—" he began.

"No more, Kingsley. I tell you, matters must go on. Edgerton can now only be driven from my house by my wife. If she expels him, I shall be too happy not to forgive him. But if she makes it necessary that the expulsion shall be effected by my hands, and with violence—God have mercy upon both of them, for I shall not. Good night!"

"But why will you go? Stay awhile longer. Be not rash—do nothing precipitately, Clifford."

I smiled bitterly in replying:—

"You need not fear me. Have I not proved myself patient—patient until you pronounced me cold and indifferent? Why should you suppose that, having waited and forborne so long,

I should be guilty of rashness now? No, Kingsley! My wife is very dear to me—how dear I will not say; I will be deliberate for her sake—for my own. I will be sure, very sure—quite sure;—but, once sure!—Good night."

Kingsley followed me to the door. His last injunctions exhorted me to forbearance and deliberation. I silenced them by a significant repetition of the single words, "Good night—good night!" and hurried, with every feeling of anxiety and jealousy awakened, in the direction of my cottage.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE UNBRIDLED MADNESS.

The night did not promise to be a good one. The clouds were scudding wildly from east to west. The air was moist and chill. There was no light from moon or stars, and I strode with difficulty, though still rapidly, through the unpaved streets. I was singularly and painfully excited by the conversation with Kingsley. My own experience before, had prepared me to become so, with the slightest additional provocation. Facts were rapidly accumulating to confirm my fears, and lessen my doubts. That dark, meaning letter of Mrs. Delaney! The adventure in the streamlet.—The scream—the look—the secrecy! What a history seemed to be compressed in these few topics.

I hurried forward—I was now among the trees. I had almost to grope my way, it was so dark. I was helped forward by some governing instincts. My fiend was busy all the while. I fancied, now, that there was something exulting in his tone. But he drove me forward without forbearance. I felt that these clouds in the sky—this gloom and excitement in my heart—were not for nothing. Every gust of wind brought to me some whisper of fear; and there seemed a constant murmur among the trees—one burden—whose incessant utterance was only shame and wo. How completely the agony of one's spirit sheds its tone of horror upon the surrounding world. How the flowers wither as our hearts wither—how sickly grows sunlight and moonlight, in our despair—how lonely and utter sad is the breath of winds, when our bosoms are about to be laid bare of hope and sustenance by the brooding tempest of our sorrows.

I had a terrible prescience of some dreadful experience which awaited me as I drove forward. Obstructions of tree and shrub, and tangled vines, encountered me, but did not long

arrest, and I really felt them not. I put them aside without a consciousness.

At length a glimmering light informed me I was near the cottage. I could see the heavy dark masses of foliage that crowded before the entrance. The light was in the parlor. There was also one in the room of Mrs. Porterfield. Ours, which was on the same floor with hers, was in darkness. I never experienced sensations more like those of a drunken man than when, working my way cautiously among the trees, I approached the window. The glasses were down, possibly in consequence of the violence of the gust. But there was one thing unusual. The curtains were also down at both windows. These curtains were half-curtains only. They fell from the upper edge of the lower sash, and were simply meant to protect the inmates from the casual glance of persons in front. The house was on an elevation of two or three feet from the ground. It was impossible to see into the apartment unless I could raise myself at least that much above my own stature. I looked around me for a stump, bench, block—anything; but there was nothing, or in the darkness I failed to find it. To clamber up against the side of the house would have disturbed the inmates. I ascended a tree, and buried within its leaves, looked directly into the apartment.

They were together! alone!—at the eternal chess! Julia sat upon the sofa. Edgerton in front of her. A small table stood between them. I had arrived at an opportune moment. Julia's hand was extended to the board. I saw the very piece it rested upon. It was the white queen; but, just at that moment—nothing could be more clearly visible—the hand of Edgerton was laid upon hers. She instantly withdrew it, and looked upward. Her face was the color of carnation—flushed—so said my demon, with the overwhelming passions in her breast. The next moment the table was thrust aside—the chess-men tumbled upon the floor, and Edgerton kneeling before my wife had grasped her about the waist, and was dragging her to his knee.

I saw no more. A sudden darkness passed over my eyes. A keen, quick, thrilling pang went through my whole frame, and I fell from the tree, upon the earth below, in utter unconsciousness.

CHAPTER XLVII.

FATAL SILENCE.

Strange and cruel destiny! When everything depended upon my firmness, I was overwhelmed by feebleness. It seemed as if I had not before believed that this terrible moment of confirmation would come. And yet, if anybody could have been prepared for such a discovery, I should have been. I had brooded over it for months. A thousand times had my imagination pictured it to me in the most vivid and fearful aspect. I fancied that I should have been steeled by conviction against every other feeling but that of vengeance. But in reality, my hope was so sanguine, my love for Julia so fervent, I did not, amidst all my fears, really believe that such a thing could ever prove true. All my boasted planning and preparation, and espionage, had only deceived myself. I believed, at worst, that Julia might be brought to love William Edgerton, but that he would presume to give utterance to his love, and that she would submit to listen, was not truly within my belief. I had not been prepared for this, however much, in my last interview with Kingsley, I had professed myself to be.

But had she submitted? That was still a question. I had seen nothing beyond what I have stated. His audacious hand had rested upon hers—his impious arm had encircled her waist, and then my blindness and darkness followed. I was struck as completely senseless, and fell from the tree with as little seeming life, as if a sudden bullet had traversed my heart.

In this state I lay. How long I know not—it must have been for several hours. I was brought to consciousness by a

sense of cold. I was benumbed—a steady rain was falling, and from the condition of my clothes, which were completely saturated, must have been falling for some time previous. I rose with pain and difficulty to my feet. I was still as one stunned and stupified, by one of those extremes of suffering for which the overcharged heart can find no sufficient or sufficiently rapid method of relief. When I rose, the light was no longer in the parlor. The parties were withdrawn.

Horrible thought! That I should have failed at that trying moment. I knew everything—I knew nothing. It was still possible that Julia had repulsed him. I had seen *his* audacity only—was it followed by *her* guilt? How shall that be known? I could answer this question as Kingsley would have answered it.

"If your wife be honest, she must now reveal the truth. She can no longer forbear. The proceeding of Edgerton has been too decided, and she shares his guilt if she longer keeps it secret. The wife who submits to this form of insult, without seeking protection where alone it may be found, clearly shows that the offence is grateful to her—that she deems it no insult."

That, then, shall be the test! So I determined. Edgerton must be punished. There is no escape. But for her—if she does not seek the earliest occasion to reveal the truth, she is guilty beyond doubt—doomed beyond redemption.

I entered the house with difficulty. I was as feeble as if I had been under the hands of the physician for weeks. A light was burning on the staircase. I took it and went into the parlor, which I narrowly examined. There were no remaining proofs of the late disorder. The table was set against the wall. The chess-men were all gathered up, and neatly put away in the box, which stood upon the mantel.

"There is proof of coolness and deliberation here!" I muttered to myself, as I took my way up-stairs. When I entered my chamber, I felt a pang, the fore-runner of a spasm. I had been for several years afflicted with these spasms, in great or small degree. They marked every singular mental excitement under which I labored. It was no doubt one of these spasms which had seized and overpowered me while I sat within the tree. Never before had I suffered from one so severe; but the violence of this was naturally due to the extreme of agony—as

sudden as it was terrible—which seized upon my soul. My physician had provided me with a remedy against these attacks to which I was accustomed to resort. This, though a potent remedy, was also a potent poison. It was a medicine called the hydrocyanic or prussic acid. Five minims was a dose, but two drops were death. I went to the medicine-case which stood beneath the head of the bed, with the view to getting out the vial; but my wife started up eagerly as I approached, and with trembling accents, demanded what was the matter. She saw me covered with mud and soaking with water. I told her that I had got wet coming homeward and had slipped down the hill.

"Why did you stay so late—why not come home sooner, dear husband?"

"Hypocrite!" I muttered while stooping down for the chest.

"You are sick—you have your spasms!" she now said, rising from the bed and offering to measure the medicine. This she had repeatedly done before; but I was not now willing to trust her. Doubts of her fidelity led to other doubts.

"If she is prepared to dishonor, she is prepared to destroy you!" said my familiar.

This suggestion seized upon my brain, and while I measured out the minims, the busy fiend reminded me that I grasped the bane as well as the antidote in my hand. A stern, a terrible image of retributive justice presented itself before my thoughts. The feeling of an awful necessity grew strong within me. "Shall the adulterer alone perish? Shall the adultress escape?" The fiend answered with tremulous but stern passion—"She shall surely die!"

"If she reveals not the truth in season," I said in my secret soul; "if she claims not protection at my hands against the adulterer, she shall share his fate!" and with this resolve, even at the moment when I was measuring the antidote for myself, I resolved that the same vial should furnish the bane for her!

The medicine relieved me, though not with the same promptness as usual. I looked at the watch and found it two o'clock. My wife begged me to come to bed, but that was impossible. I proceeded to change my garments. By the time that I had finished, the rain ceased, the stars came out, the morning prom-

ised to be clear. I determined to set forth from my office. I had no particular purpose; but I felt that I could not meditate where she was. She continually spoke to me—always tenderly and with great earnestness. I pleaded my spasms as a reason for not lying down. But I lingered. I was as unwilling to go as to stay. I longed to hear her narrative; and, once or twice, I fancied that she wished to tell me something. But she did not. I waited till near daylight, in order that she should have every opportunity, but she said little beyond making professions of love, and imploring me to come to bed.

In sheer despair, at last, I went out, taking my pistol-case, unperceived by her, under my arm. I went to my office where I locked it up. There I seated myself, brooding in a very whirlwind of thought, until after daylight.

When the sun had risen, I went to a man in the neighborhood who hired out vehicles. I ordered a close carriage to be at my door by a certain hour, immediately after breakfast. I then despatched a note to Kingsley, saying briefly that Edgerton and myself would call for him at nine. I then returned home. My wife had arisen, but had not left the chamber. She pleaded headache and indisposition, and declined coming out to breakfast. She seemed very sad and unhappy, not to say greatly disquieted—appearances which I naturally attributed to guilt. For—still she said nothing. I lingered near her on various small pretences in the hope to hear her speak. I even made several approaches which, I fancied, might tend to provoke the wished-for revelation. Indeed, it was wished for as ardently as ever soul wished for the permission to live—prayed for as sincerely as the dying man prays for respite, and the temporary remission of his doom.

In vain! My wife said little, and nothing to the purpose. The moments became seriously short. Could she have anything to say? Was it possible that, being innocent, she should still lock up the guilty secret in her bosom? She could not be innocent to do so! This conclusion seemed inevitable. In order that she should have no plea of discouragement, I spoke to her with great tenderness of manner, with a more than usual display of feeling. It was no mere show. I felt all that I said and looked. I knew that a trying and terrible event was at hand

—an event painful to us both—and all my love for her revived with tenfold earnestness. Oh! how I longed to take her into my arms, and warn her tenderly of the consequences of her error; but this, of course, was impossible. But, short of this, I did everything that I thought likely to induce her confidence. I talked familiarly to her, and fondly, with an effort at childlike simplicity and earnestness, in the hope that, by thus renewing the dearest relations of ease and happiness between us, she should be beguiled into her former trusting readiness of speech. She met my fondnesses with equal fondness. It seemed to give her particular pleasure that I should be thus fond. In her embrace, requiting mine, she clung to me; and her tears dropping warm upon my hands, were yet attended by smiles of the most hearty delight. A thousand times she renewed the assurances of her love and attachment—nay, she even went so far as tenderly to upbraid me that our moments of endearment were so few;—yet, in spite of all this, she still forbore the *one only* subject. She still said nothing; and as I knew how much she *could* say and ought to say, which she did not say, I could not resist the conviction that her tears were those of the crocodile, and her assurances of love the glozing commonplaces of the harlot.

In silence she suffered me to leave her for the breakfast-table. She looked, it is true—but what had I to do with looks, however earnest and devoted? I went from her slowly. When on the stairs, fancying I had heard her voice, I returned, but she had not called me. She was still silent. Full of sadness I left her, counting slowly and sadly every step which I took from her presence.

Edgerton was already at table. He looked very wretched. I observed him closely. His eye shrunk from the encounter of mine. His looks answered sufficiently for his guilt. I said to him:—

"I have to ride out a little ways in the country this morning, and count upon your company. I trust you feel well enough to go with me? Indeed, it will do you good."

Of course, my language and manner were stripped of everything that might alarm his fears. He hesitated, but complied. The carriage was at the door before we had finished breakfast;

and with no other object than simply to afford her another opportunity for the desired revelation, I once more went up to my wife's chamber. Here I lingered fully ten minutes, affecting to search for a paper in trunks where I knew it could not be found. While thus engaged I spoke to her frequently and fondly. She did not need the impulse to make her revelation, except in her own heart. The occasion was unemployed. She suffered me once more to depart in silence; and this time I felt as if the word of utter and inevitable wo had been spoken. The hour had gone by for ever. I could no longer resist the conviction of her shameless guilt. All her sighs and tears, professions of love and devotion, the fond tenacity of her embrace, the deep-seated earnestness and significance in her looks—all went for nothing in her failure to utter the one only, and all-important communication.

Let no woman, on any pretext, however specious, deceive herself with the fatal error, that she can safely harbor, unspoken to her husband, the secret of any insult, or base approach, of another to herself!

CHAPTER XLVIII.

TOO LATE!

EDGERTON announced himself to be in readiness, and, at the same time, declared his intention to withdraw at once from our hospitality and return to his old lodging-house. He had already given instructions to his servant for the removal of his things.

"What!" I said with a feeling of irony, which did not make itself apparent in my speech—"you are tired of our hospitality, Edgerton? We have not treated you well, I am afraid."

"Yes," he muttered faintly, "too well. I have every reason to be gratified and grateful. No reason to complain."

He forced himself to say something more by way of acknowledgment; but to this I gave little heed. We drove first to Kingsley's, and took him up; then, to my office, where I got out, and, entering the office, wrapped up my pistol-case carefully in a newspaper, so that the contents might not be conjectured, and bringing it forth, thrust it into the boot of the carriage.

"What have you got there?" demanded Kingsley.

"Something for digestion," was my reply. "We may be kept late."

"You are wise enough to be a traveller," said Kingsley; and without further words we drove on. I fancied that when I put the case into the vehicle, Edgerton looked somewhat suspicious. That he was uneasy was evident enough. He could not well be otherwise. The consciousness of guilt was enough to make

him so; and then there was but little present sympathy between himself and Kingsley.

I had already given the driver instructions. He carried us into the loneliest spot of woods some four miles from M——, and in a direction very far from the beaten track.

"What brings you into this quarter?" demanded Kingsley. "What business have you here?"

"We stop here," I said as the carriage drove up. "I have some land to choose and measure here. Shall we alight, gentlemen?"

I took the pistol-case in my hands and led the way. They followed me. The carriage remained. We went on together several hundred yards until I fancied we should be quite safe from interruption. We were in a dense forest. At a little distance was a small stretch of tolerably open pine land, which seemed to answer the usual purposes. Here I paused and confronted them.

"Mr. Kingsley," I said without further preliminaries, "I have taken the liberty of bringing you here, as the most honorable man I know, in order that you should witness the adjustment of an affair of honor between Mr. Edgerton and myself."

As I spoke I unrolled the pistol-case. Edgerton grew pale as death, but remained silent. Kingsley was evidently astonished, but not so much so as to forbear the obvious answer.

"How! an affair of honor? Is this inevitable—necessary, Clifford?"

"Absolutely!"

"In no way to be adjusted?"

"In but one! This man has dishonored me in the dearest relations of my household."

"Ha! can it be?"

"Too true! There is no help for it now. I am dealing with him still as a man of honor. I should have been justified in shooting him down like a dog—as one shoots down the reptile that crawls to the cradle of his children. I give him an equal chance for life."

"It is only what I feared!" said Kingsley, looking at Edgerton as he spoke.

The latter had staggered back against a tree. Big drops of

sweat stood upon his brows. His head hung down. Still he was silent. I gave the weapons to Kingsley, who proceeded to charge them.

"I will not fight you, Clifford!" exclaimed the criminal with husky accents.

"You must!"

"I can not—I dare not—I will not! You may shoot me down where I stand. I have wronged you. I dare not lift weapon at your breast."

"Wretch! say not this!" I answered. "You must make the atonement."

"Be it so! Shoot me! You are right! I am ready to die."

"No, William Edgerton, no! You must not refuse me the only atonement you can make. You must not couple that atonement with a sting. Hear me! You have violated the rites of hospitality, the laws of honor and of manhood, and grossly abused all the obligations of friendship. These offences would amply justify me in taking your life without scruple, and without exposing my own to any hazard. But my soul revolts at this. I remember the past—our boyhood together—and the parental kindness of your venerated parent. These deprive me of a portion of that bitterness which would otherwise have moved me to destroy you. Take the pistol. If life is nothing to you, it is as little to me now. Use the privilege which I give you, and I shall be satisfied with the event."

He shook his head while he repeated:—

"No! I can not. Say no more, Clifford. I deserve death!"

I clapped the pistol to his head. He folded his arms, lifted his eyes, and regarded me more steadily than he had done for months before. Kingsley struck up my arm, as I was cocking the weapon.

"He must die!" I exclaimed fiercely.

"Yes, that is certain!" replied the other. "But I am not willing that I should be brought here as the witness to a murder. If he will fight you, I will see you through. If he will not fight you, there needs no witness to your shooting him. You have no right, Clifford, to require this of me."

"You are not a coward, William Edgerton?"

"Coward!" he exclaimed, and his form rose to its fullest

height, and his eye flashed out the fires of a manhood, which of late he had not often shown.

"Coward! No! Do I not tell you shoot? I do not fear death. Nay, let me say to you, Clifford, I long for it. Life has been a long torture to me—is still a torture. It can not now be otherwise. Take it—you will see me smile in the death agony."

"Hear me William Edgerton, and submit to my will. You know not half your wrong. You drove me from my home—my birthplace. When I was about to sacrifice you for your previous invasion of my peace in C——, I looked on your old father, I heard the story of his disappointment—his sorrows—and you were the cause. I determined to spare you—to banish myself rather, in order to avoid the necessity of taking your life. You were not satisfied with having wrought this result. You have pursued me to the woods, where my cottage once more began to blossom with the fruits of peace and love. You trample upon its peace—you renew your indignities and perfidies here. You drive me to desperation and fill my habitation with disgrace. Will you deny me then what I ask? Will you refuse me the atonement—any atonement—which I may demand?"

"No, Clifford!" he replied, after a pause in which he seemed subdued with shame and remorse. "You shall have it as you wish. I will fight you. I am all that you declare. I am guilty of the wrong you urge against me. I knew not, till now, that I had been the cause of your flight from C——. Had I known that!"

Kingsley offered him the pistol.

"No!" he said, putting it aside. "Not now! I will give you this atonement this afternoon. At this moment I can not. I must write. I must make another atonement. Your claim for justice, Clifford, must not preclude my settlement of the claims of others."

"Mine must have preference!"

"It shall! The atonement which I propose to make shall be one of repentance. You would not deny me the melancholy privilege of saying a few last words to my wretched parents?"

"No! no! no!"

"I thank you, Clifford. Come for me at four to my lodgings —bring Mr. Kingsley with you. You will find me ready to atone, and to save you every unnecessary pang in doing so."

This ended our conference. Kingsley rode home with him, while, throwing myself upon the ground, I surrendered myself to such meditations as were natural to the moods which governed me. They were dark and dismal enough. Edgerton had avowed his guilt. Could there be any doubt on the subject of my wife's? He had made no sort of qualification in his avowal of guilt, which might acquit her. He had evidently made his confession with the belief that I was already in possession of the whole truth. One hope alone remained—that my wife's voluntary declaration would still be forthcoming. To that I clung as the drowning man to his last plank. When Kingsley and Edgerton first left me, I had resolved to waste the hours in the woods and not to return home until after my final meeting in the afternoon with the latter. It might be that I should not return home then, and in such an event I was not unwilling that my wife should still live, the miserable thing which she had made herself. But, with the still fond hope that she might speak, and speak in season, I now resolved to return at the usual dinner hour; and, timing myself accordingly, I prolonged my wanderings through the woods until noon. I then set forward, and reached the cottage a little sooner than I had expected.

I found Julia in bed. She complained of headache and fever. She had already taken medicine—I sat beside her. I spoke to her in the tenderest language. I felt, at the moment when I feared to lose her for ever, that I could love nothing half so well. I spoke to her with as much freedom as fondness; and, momently expecting her to make the necessary revelation, I hung upon her slightest words, and hung upon them only to be disappointed.

The dinner hour came. The meal was finished. I returned to the chamber, and once more resumed my place beside her on the couch. I strove to inspire her with confidence—to awaken her sensibilities—to beguile her to the desired utterance, but in vain. Of course I could give no hint whatsoever of the knowledge which I had obtained. After that, her confession

would have been no longer voluntary, and could no longer have been credited.

Time sped—too rapidly as I thought. Though anxious for vengeance, I loved her too fondly not to desire to delay the minutes in the earnest expectation that she would speak at last. She did not. The hour approached of my meeting with Edgerton; and then I felt that Edgerton was not the only criminal.

Mrs. Porterfield just then brought in some warm tea, and placed it on the table at the bed head. After a few moments' delay, she left us alone together. The eyes of my wife were averted. The vial of prussic acid stood on the same table with the tea. I rose from the couch, interposed my person between it and the table—and, taking up the poison, deliberately poured three drops into the beverage. I never did anything more firmly. Yet I was not the less miserable, because I was most firm. My nerve was that of the executioner who carries out a just judgment. This done, I put the vial into my pocket. Julia then spoke to me. I turned to her with eagerness. I was prepared to cast the vessel of tea from the window. It was my hope that she was about to speak, though late, the necessary truths. But she only called to me to know if I had been to my office during the morning.

"Not since nine o'clock," was my answer. "Why?"

"Nothing. But are you going to your office now, dear husband?"

"Not directly. I shall possibly be there in the course of the afternoon. What do you wish? Why do you ask?"

"Oh, nothing," she replied; "but I will tell you to-morrow why I ask."

"To-morrow!—tell me now, if it be anything of moment. Now! now is the appointed time!" The serious language of Scripture became natural to me in the agonizing situation in which I stood.

"No! no! to-morrow will do. I will not gratify your curiosity. You are too curious, husband;" and she turned from me, smiling, upon the couch.

I felt that what she might tell me to-morrow could have nothing to do with the affair between herself and Edgerton.

That could be no object for jest and merriment. I turned from her slowly, with a feeling at my heart which was not exactly madness—for I knew then what I was doing—but it was just the feeling to make me doubtful how long I should be secure from madness.

"To-morrow will not do," I muttered to myself as I descended the stairs. "Too late!—too late!"

CHAPTER XLIX.

SUICIDE.

From the cottage I proceeded to Kingsley's. He was in readiness, and waiting me. We drove directly to Edgerton's lodging-house, the appointed hour of four being at hand. Kingsley only alighted from the carriage, and entered the dwelling. He was absent several minutes. When he returned, he returned alone.

"Edgerton is either asleep or has gone out. His room-door is locked. The landlord called and knocked, but received no answer. He lacks manliness, and I suspect has fled. The steamboat went at two."

"Impossible!" I exclaimed, leaping from the carriage. "I know Edgerton better. I can not think he would fly, after the solemn pledge he gave me."

"You have only thought too well of him always," said the other, as we entered the house.

"Let us go to the room together," I said to the landlord. "I fear something wrong."

"Well, so do I," responded the publican. "The poor gentleman has been looking very badly, and sometimes gets into a strange wild taking, and then he goes along seeing nobody. Only last Saturday I said to my old woman, as how I thought everything warn't altogether right *here*,"—and the licensed sinner touched his head with his fore-finger, himself looking the very picture of well-satisfied sagacity. We said nothing, but leaving the eloquence to him, followed him up to Edgerton's chamber. I struck the door thrice with the butt end of my whip, then called his name, but without receiving any answer.

Endeavoring to look through the key-hole, I discovered the key on the inside, and within the lock. I then immediately conjectured the truth. William Edgerton had committed suicide.

And so it was. We burst the door, and found him suspended by a silk handkerchief to a beam that traversed the apartment. He had raised himself upon a chair, which he had kicked over after the knot had been adjusted. Such a proceeding evinced the most determined resolution.

We took him down with all despatch, but life had already been long extinct. He must have been hanging two hours. His face was perfectly livid—his eyeballs dilated—his mouth distorted—but the neck remained unbroken. He had died by suffocation. I pass over the ordinary proceedings—the consternation, the clamor, the attendance of the grave-looking gentlemen with lancet and lotion. They did a great deal, of course, in doing nothing. Nothing could be done. Then followed the "crowner's" inquest. A paper, addressed to the landlord, was submitted to them, and formed the burden of their report.

"I die by my own hands," said this document, "that I may lose the sense of pain, bodily and mental. I die at peace with the world. It has never wronged me. I am the source of my own sorrows, as I am the cause of my own death. I will not say that I die sane. I am doubtful on that head. I am sure that I have been the victim of a sort of madness for a very long time. This has led me to do wrong, and to meditate wrong—has made me guilty of many things, which, in my better moments of mind and body, I should have shrunk from in horror. I write this that nobody may be suspected of sharing in a deed the blame of which must rest on my head only."

Then followed certain apologies to the landlord for having made his house the scene of an event so shocking. The same paper also conveyed certain presents of personal stuff to the same person, with thanks for his courtesy and attention. An adequate sum of money, paying his bill, and the expenses of his funeral, was left in his purse, upon the paper.

Kingsley assumed the final direction of these affairs; and having seen everything in a fair way for the funeral, which was appointed to take place the next morning, he hurried me away to his lodging-house.

CHAPTER L.

CONFESSION OF EDGERTON.

When within his chamber, he carefully fastened the door and placed a packet in my hands.

"This is addressed to you," he said. "I found it on the table with other papers, and seeing the address, and fearing that if the jury laid eyes on it, they might insist on knowing its contents, I thrust it into my pocket and said nothing about it there. Read it at your leisure, while I smoke a cigar below."

He left me, and I opened the seal with a sense of misgiving and apprehension for which I could not easily account. The outer packet was addressed to myself. But the envelope contained several other papers, one of which was addressed to his father; another—a small billet, unsealed—bore the name of my wife upon it.

"That," I inly muttered, "she shall never read!"

An instant after, I trembled with a convulsive horror, as the demon who had whispered in my ears so long, seemed to say, in mocking accents:—

"Shall not! Ha! ha! She can not! can not!" and then the fiend seemed to chuckle, and I remembered the insuppressible anguish of Othello's apostrophe, to make all its eloquence my own. I murmured audibly:—

> "My wife! my wife! What wife?—I have no wife!
> Oh, insupportable—oh, heavy hour!"

My eyes were blinded. My face sunk down upon the table, and a cold shiver shook my frame as if I had an ague. But I recovered myself when I remembered the wrongs I had endured—her guilt and the guilt of Edgerton. I clutched the papers—brushed the big drops from my forehead, and read as follows:—

"Clifford, I save you guiltless of my death. You would be less happy were my blood upon your hands, for, though I deserve to die by them, I know your nature too well to believe that you would enjoy any malignant satisfaction at the performance of so sad a duty. Still, I know that this is no atonement. I have simply ceased from persecuting you and the angelic woman, your wife. But how shall I atone for the tortures and annoyances of the past, inflicted upon you both? Never! never! I perish without hope of forgiveness, though, here, alone with God, in the extreme of mortal humility, I pray for it!

"Perhaps, you know all. From what escaped you this morning, it would seem so. You knew of my madness when in C——; you know that it pursued you here. Nothing then remains for me to tell. I might simply say all is true; but that, in the confession of my guilt and folly, each particular act of sin demands its own avowal, as it must be followed by its own bitter agony and groan.

"My passion for your wife began soon after your marriage. Until then I had never known her. You will acquit me of any deliberate design to win her affections. I strove, as well as I could, to suppress my own. But my education did not fit me for such a struggle. The indulgence of fond parents had gratified all my wishes, and taught me to expect their gratification. I could not subdue my passions even when they were unaccompanied by any hopes. Without knowing my own feelings, I approached your wife. Our tastes were similar, and these furnished the legitimate excuse for frequently bringing us together. The friendly liberality of your disposition enlarged the privileges of the acquaintance, and, without meaning it at first, I abused them. I sought your dwelling at unsuitable periods. Unconsciously, I did so, just at those periods when you were most likely to be absent. I first knew that my course was wrong, by discovering the unwillingness which I felt to encounter you. This taught me to know the true nature of my sentiments, but without enforcing the necessity of subduing them. I did not seek to subdue them long. I yielded myself up, with the recklessness of insanity, to a passion whose very sweetness had the effect to madden.

"My fondness for your wife was increased by pity. You

neglected her. I was at first indignant and hated you accordingly. But I became glad of your neglect for two reasons. It gave me the opportunities for seeing her which I desired; and I felt persuaded with a vain folly, that nothing could be more natural than that she would make a comparison, favorable of course to myself, between my constant solicitude and attention and your ungenerous abandonment. But I was mistaken. The steady virtue of the wife revenged the wrong which, without deliberately intending it, I practised against the husband. When my attentions became apparent, she received me with marked coolness and reserve; and finally ceased to frequent the *atelier*, which, while art alone was my object, yielded, I think, an equal and legitimate pleasure to us both.

"I saw and felt the change, but had not the courage to discontinue my persecutions. My passion, and the tenacity with which it enforced its claims, seemed to increase with every difficulty and denial. The strangeness of your habits facilitated mine. Almost nightly I visited your house, and though I could not but see that the reserve of your wife now rose into something like hauteur, yet my infatuation was so great that I began to fancy this appearance to be merely such a disguise as Prudence assumes in order to conceal its weaknesses, and discourage the invader whom it can no longer baffle. With this impression I hurried on to the commission of an offence, the results of which, though they did not quell my desires, had the effect of terrifying them, for some time at least, into partial submission. Would to God, for all our sakes, that their submission had been final!

"You remember the ball at Mrs. Delaney's marriage? I waltzed once with your wife that evening. She refused to waltz a second time. The privileges of this intoxicating dance are such as could be afforded by no other practice in social communion—the lady still preserving the reputation of virtue. I need not say with what delight I employed these privileges. The pressure of her arm and waist maddened me; and when the hour grew late, and you did not appear, Mrs. Delaney counselled me to tender my carriage for the purpose of conveying her home. I did so;—it was refused; but, through the urgent suggestions of her mother, it was finally accepted. I assisted

her to the carriage, immediately followed, and took my place beside her. She was evidently annoyed, and drew herself up with a degree of lofty reserve, which, under other cirumstances, and had I been less excited than I was, by the events of the evening, would have discouraged my presumption. It did not. I proceeded to renew those liberties which I had taken during the dance. I passed my arm about her waist. She repulsed me with indignation, and insisted upon my setting her down where we were, in the unfrequented street, at midnight. This I refused. She threatened me with your anger; and when, still deceiving myself on the subject of her real feelings, I proceeded to other liberties, she dashed her hand through the windows of the coach, and cried aloud for succor. This alarmed me. I promised her forbearance, and finally set her down, very much agitated, at the entrance of your dwelling. She refused my assistance to the house, but fell to the ground before reaching it. That night her miscarriage ensued, and my passions for a season were awed into inactivity, if not silence.

"Still, I could not account for her forbearance to reveal everything to you. You were still kind and affectionate to me as ever. I very well knew that had she disclosed the secret, you were not the man to submit to such an indignity as that of which I had been guilty. It seems—so I infer from what you said this morning—that you knew it all. If you did, your forbearance was equally unexpected and merciful. Believing that she had kept my secret, my next conclusion was inevitable. 'She is not altogether insensible to the passion she inspires. Her strength is in her virtues alone. Her sympathies are clearly mine!' These conclusions emboldened me. I haunted your house nightly with music. Sheltered beneath your trees, I poured forth the most plaintive strains which I could extort from my flute. Passion increased the effect of art. I strove at no regular tunes; I played as the mood prompted; and felt myself, not unfrequently, weeping over my own strange, irregular melodies.

"Your sudden determination to remove prevented the renewal of my persecutions. I need not say how miserable I was made, and how much I was confounded by such a determination. Explained by yourself this morning, it is now easily understood;

but, ignorant then of the discoveries you had made — ignorant of your merciful forbearance toward my unhappy parents — for I can regard your forbearance with respect to myself as arising only from your consideration of them — it was unaccountable that you should give up the prospect of fortune and honors, which success, in every department of your business, seemed certainly to secure you.

"The last night — the eve of your departure from C——, I resumed my place among the trees before your dwelling. Here I played and wandered with an eye ever fixed upon your windows. While I gazed, I caught the glimpse of a figure that buried itself hurriedly behind the folds of a curtain. I could suppose it to be one person only. I never thought of you. Urged by a feeling of desperation, which took little heed of consequences, I clambered up into the branches of a pride of India, which brought me within twenty feet of the window. I distinctly beheld the curtain ruffled by the sudden motion of some one behind it. I was about to speak — to say — no matter what. The act would have been madness, and such, doubtless, would have been the language. I fortunately did not speak. A few moments only had elapsed after this, when I heard a few brief words, spoken in *her* voice, from the same window. The words were few, and spoken in tones which denoted the great agitation of the speaker. These apprized me of my danger.

"'Fly, madman, for your life! My husband is on the stairs.'

"Her person was apparent. Her words could not be mistaken though spoken in faint, feeble accents. At the same moment I heard the lower door of the dwelling unclose, and without knowing what I did or designed, I dropped from the tree to the ground. To my great relief, you did not perceive me. I was fortunately close to the fence, and in the deepest shadow of the tree. You hurried by, within five steps of me, and jumped the fence, evidently thinking to find me in the next enclosure. Breathing freely and thankfully after this escape, I fled immediately to the little boat in which I usually made my approaches to your habitation on such occasions; and was in the middle of the lake, and out of sight, long before you had given over your fruitless pursuit. The next day you left the city, and I remained, the wasted and wasting monument of pas-

sions which had been as profitlessly as they were criminally exercised.

"You were gone;—you had borne with you the object of my devotion; but the passion remained and burnt with no less frenzy than before. You were not blind to the effect of this frenzy upon my health and constitution. You saw that I was consuming with a nameless disease. Perhaps you knew the cause and the name, and your departure may have been prompted by a sentiment of pity for myself, in addition to that which you felt for my unhappy parents. If this be so—and it seems probable—it adds something to the agony of life—it will assist me in the work of atonement—it will better reconcile me to the momentary struggle of death.

"My ill health increased with the absence of the only object for whom health was now desirable. To see her again—to the last—for I now knew that that last could not be very remote—was the great desire of my mind. Besides, strange to say, a latent hope was continually rising and trembling in my soul. I still fancied that I had a place in the affections of your wife. You will naturally ask on what this hope was founded. I answer, on the supposition that she had concealed from you the truth on the subject of my presumptuous assault upon her; and on those words of warning by which she had counselled me to fly from your pursuit on that last night before you left the city. These may not be very good reasons for such a hope, but the faith of the devotee needs but slight supply of aliment; and the fanaticism of a flame like mine needs even less. A whisper, a look, a smile—nay, even a frown—has many a time prompted stronger convictions than this, in wiser heads, and firmer hearts than mine.

"My father counselled me to travel, and I was only too glad to obey his suggestions. He prescribed the route, but I deceived him. Once on the road, I knew but one route that could do me good, or at least afford me pleasure. I pursued the object of my long devotion. Here your conduct again led me astray. I found you still neglectful of your wife. Still, you received me as if I had been a brother, and thus convinced me that Julia had kept my secret. In keeping it thus long I now fancied it had become hers. I renewed my devotions, but with as little

profit as before. She maintained the most rigid distance, and I grew nervous and feeble in consequence of the protracted homage which I paid, and the excitement which followed from this homage. You had a proof of this nervousness and excitement in the incident which occurred while crossing the streamlet. I extended her my hand to assist her over, and scarcely had her fingers touched mine, when I felt a convulsion, and sunk, fainting and hopelessly into the stream.* Conscious of nothing besides, I was yet conscious of her screams. This tender interest in my fate increased my madness. It led to a subsequent exhibition of it which at length fully opened my eyes to the enormity of my offence.

"You blindly as I then thought, took me to your dwelling as if I had been a brother. Ah! why? If I was mad, Clifford, your madness was not less than mine. It was the blindest madness if not the worst. The progress of my insanity was now more rapid than ever. I fancied that I perceived signs of something more than coldness between yourself and wife. I fancied that you frowned upon her; and in the grave, sad, speaking looks which she addressed to you, I thought I read the language of dislike and defiance. My own attentions to her were redoubled whenever an opportunity was afforded me; but this was not often. I saw as little of her while living in your cottage as I had seen before, and, but for the good old lady, Mrs. Porterfield, I should probably have been even less blessed by her presence. She perceived my dullness, and feeble health, and dreaming no ill, insisted that your wife should assist in beguiling me of my weariness. She set us down frequently at chess, and loved to look on and watch the progress of the game.

"She did not always watch, and last night, while we played together, in a paroxysm of madness, I proceeded to those liberties which I suppose provoked her to make the revelation which she had so long forborne. My impious hands put aside the board, my arms encircled her waist; while, kneeling beside her, I endeavored to drag her into my embrace. She repulsed me; smote me to her feet with her open palm; and spurning me

* An incident somewhat similar to this occurs in the Life of Petrarch, as given by Mrs. Dobson, but the precise facts are not remembered, and I have not the volume by me.

where I lay grovelling, retired to her chamber. I know not what I said—I know not what she answered—yet the tones of her voice, sharp with horror and indignation, are even now ringing in my ears!

"Clifford, I have finished this painful narration. I have cursed your home with bitterness, yet I pray you not to curse me! Let me implore you to ask for merciful forbearance from her, to whom I feel I have been such a sore annoyance—too happy if I have not been also a curse to her. What I have written is the truth—sadly felt—solemnly spoken—God alone being present while I write, while death lingers upon the threshold impatient till I shall end. I leave a brief sentence, which you may or may not, deliver to your wife. You will send the letter to my father. You will see me buried in some holy enclosure; and if you can, you will bury with my unconscious form, the long strifes of feeling which I have made you endure, and the just anger which I have awakened in your bosom. Farewell!—and may the presiding spirit of your home hereafter, be peace and love!"

CHAPTER LI.

DOUBTS — SUMMONS.

THE billet which was addressed to my wife was in the following language :—

"Lady, on the verge of the grave, having sincerely repented of the offence I have given you, I implore you to pity and to pardon. A sense of guilt and shame weighs me down to earth. You can not apply a harsher judgment to my conduct than I feel it deserves; but I am crushed already. You will not trample the prostrate. In a few hours my body will be buried in the dust. My soul is already there. But, though writhing, I do not curse; and still loving, I yet repent. In my last moments I implore you to forgive! forgive! forgive!"

This was all, and I considered the two documents with keen and conflicting feelings. There was an earnestness — a sincerity about them, which I could not altogether discredit. He had freely avowed his own errors; but he had not spoken for hers. I did not dare to admit the impression which he evidently wished to convey of her entire innocence, not only from the practices, but the very thoughts of guilt. It is in compliance with a point of honor that the professed libertine yet endeavors to excuse and save the partner of his wantonness. In this light I regarded all those parts of his narrative which went to extenuate her conduct. There was one part of her conduct, indeed, which, as it exceeded his ability to account for, was beyond his ability to excuse — namely, her strange concealment of his insolence. This was the grand fault which, it appeared to me, was conclusive of all the rest. It was now my policy to believe in this fault wholly. If I did not, where was I? what was my condition? — my misery?

I sat brooding, with these documents open before me on the table, when Kingsley tapped at the door. I bade him enter,

and put the papers in his hands. He read them in silence, laid them down without a word, and looked me with a grave composure in the face.

"What do you think of it?" I demanded.

"That he speaks the truth," he replied.

"Yes, no doubt—so far as he himself is concerned."

"I should think it all true."

"Indeed! I think not."

"Why do you doubt, and what?"

"I doubt those portions in which he insists upon my wife's integrity."

"Wherefore?"

"There are many reasons; the principal of which is her singular concealment of the truth. She suffers a strange man to offend her virtue with the most atrocious familiarities, and says nothing to her husband, who, alone, could have redressed the wrong and remedied the impertinence."

"That certainly is a staggering fact."

"According to his own admission, she warns him to fly from the wrath of her husband, to which his audacity had exposed him—warns him, in her night-dress, and from the window of her chamber."

"True, true! I had forgotten that."

"Look at all the circumstances. He haunts the house—according to his own showing, persecutes her with attentions, which are so marked, that, when he finds her husband ignorant of them, leads him to the conclusion—which is natural—that they are not displeasing to the wife. He avails himself of the privileges of the waltz, at the marriage of Mrs. Delaney, to gratify his lustful anticipations. He presses her arm and waist with his d——d fingers. Rides home with her, and, according to his story, takes other liberties, which she baffles and sets aside. But, mark the truth. Though she requires him to set her down in the street—though she makes terms for his forbearance—a wife making terms with a libertine—yet he evidently sees her into the house, and when she is taken sick, hurries for the mother and the physician. He tells just enough of the story to convict himself, but suppresses everything which may convict her. How know I that this resistance in the car-

riage was more than a sham? How know I that he did not attend her in the house? That they did not dabble together on their way through the dark piazza — along the stairs? — Nay, what proof is there that he did not find his way, with polluting purpose, into the very chamber? — that chamber, from which, not three weeks after, she bade him fly to avoid my wrath! What makes her so precious of his life — the life of one who pursues her with lust and dishonor — if she does not burn with like passions? But there is more."

Here I told him of the letter of Mrs. Delaney, in which that permanent beldame counsels her daughter, less against the passion itself, than against the imprudent exhibition of it. It was clear that the mother had seen what had escaped my eyes. It was clear that the mother was convinced of the attachment of the daughter for this man. Now, the attachment being shown, what followed from the concealment of the indignities to which Edgerton had subjected her, but that she was pleased with them, and did not feel them to be such. These indignities are persevered in — are frequently repeated. Our footsteps are followed from one country to another. The husband's hours of absence are noted. His departure is the invariable signal for them to meet. They meet. His hands paddle with hers; his arms grasp her waist. True, we are told by him, that she resists; but it is natural that he should make this declaration. Its truth is combated by the fact that, of these insults, *she* says nothing. That fact is everything. That one fact involves all the rest. The woman who conceals such a history, shares in its guilt.

Kingsley assented to these conclusions.

"Yet," he said, "there is an air of truthfulness about these papers — this narrative — that I should be pleased to believe, even if I could not; — that I should believe for your sake, Clifford, if for no other reason. Honestly, after all you have said and shown — with all the unexplained and perhaps unexplainable particulars before me, making the appearances so much against her — I can not think your wife guilty. I should be sorry to think so."

"I should now be sorry to think otherwise," I said huskily. I thought of that poisonous draught. I thought with many misgivings, and trembled where I sat.

"You surprise me to hear you speak so. Surely, Clifford, you love your wife?"

"Love her!" I exclaimed; I could say no more. My sobs choked my utterance.

"Nay, do not give up," he said tenderly. "Be a man. All will go well yet. The facts are anything but conclusive. These papers have a realness about them, which have their weight against any suspicions, however strong. Remember, these are the declarations of a dying man! Surely, all minor considerations of policy would give way at such a moment to the all-important necessity of speaking the truth. Besides, there is one consideration alone, to which we have made no reference, which yet seems to me full of weight and value. Edgerton could scarcely have been successful in his designs upon your wife. He was in fact dying of the disappointment of his passions. They could not have been gratified. Success takes an exulting aspect. He was always miserable and wo-begone — always desponding, sad, unhappy, from the first moment when this passion began, to the last."

"Guilt, guilt, nothing but guilt!"

"No, Clifford, no!—The guilt that works so terribly upon conscience as to produce such effects upon the frame, inevitably leads to repentance. Now, we find that Edgerton pursued his object until he was detected."

I shook my head.

"Do not steel yourself against probabilities, my dear fellow," said Kingsley.

"Proofs against probabilities always!"

"No! none of these are proofs except the papers you have in your hands, and the imperfect events which you witnessed. I am so much an admirer of your wife myself, that I am ready to believe this statement against the rest; and to believe that, however strange may have been her conduct in some respects, it will yet be explained in a manner which shall acquit her of misconduct. Believe me, Clifford, think with me——"

"No! no! I can not—dare not! She is a——"

"Do not! Do not! No harsh words, even were it so! She has been your wife. She should still be sacred in your eyes, as one who has slept upon your bosom."

"A traitress all the while, dreaming of the embraces of another."

"Clifford, what can this mean? You are singularly inveterate."

"Should I not be so? Am I not lost—abandoned—wrecked on the high seas of my hope—my fortunes scattered to the winds—my wealth, the jewel which I prized beyond all beside, which was worth the whole, gone down, swallowed up, and the black abyss closed over it for ever?"

"We are not sure of this."

"I am!"

"No! no!"

"I am! Though she be innocent, who shall rid me of the doubt, the fear, the ineradicable suspicion! *That* blackens all my sunlight; *that* poisons all my peace. I can never know delight. Nay, though you proved her innocent, it is now too late. Kingsley, by this time I have no wife!"

"Ha! Surely, Clifford, you have not——"

"Hark! Some one knocks! Again!—again!—I understand it. I know what it means. They are looking for me. She is dead or dying. I tell you it is quite in vain that you should argue. Above all, do not seek to prove her innocent."

The knocking without increased. He seized my arm as I was going forward, and prevented me.

"Compose yourself," he said, thrusting me into a chair. "Remain here till I return. I will see what is wanted."

But I followed him, and reached the door almost as soon as himself. It was as I expected. I had been sent for. My wife was dangerously ill. Such was the tenor of the message. More I could not learn. The servant had been an hour in search of me. Had sought me at the office and in other places which I had been accustomed to frequent; and I felt that after so long a delay, there was no longer need for haste. Still, I was about to depart with hasty footsteps. The servant was already dismissed. Kingsley grasped my arm.

"I will go along with you," he said; and as we went, he spoke, in low accents, to the following effect:—

"I know not what you have done, Clifford; and there is no need that I should know. Keep your secret. I do not think

the worse of you that you have been maddened to crime. Let the same desperation nerve you now to sufficient composure. Beware of what you say, lest these people suspect you."

"And what if they do? Think you, Kingsley, that I fear? No! no! Life has nothing now. I lost fear, and hope, and everything in her."

"But may she not live?"

"No, I think not; the poison is most deadly. Though, even if she lives, my loss would not be less. She ceased to live for me the moment that she began to live for another!"

CHAPTER LII.

DEATH.

NOTHING more was said until we reached the cottage. Mrs. Porterfield and the physician met us at the entrance. We had come too late!

She was dead. They had found her so when they despatched the servant in quest of me; but they were not certain of the fact, and the servant was instructed to say she was only very ill. The physician was called in as soon as possible; but had declared himself, as soon as he came, unable to do anything for her. He had bled her; and, before our arrival, had already pronounced upon her disease. It was apoplexy!

"Apoplexy!" I exclaimed involuntarily. Kingsley gave me a look.

"Yes, sir, apoplexy," continued the learned gentleman. "She must have had several fits. It is evident that she was conscious after the first, for she appears to have endeavored to reach the door. She was found at the entrance, lying upon the floor. When I saw her, she must have been lifeless a good hour."*

He added sundry reasons, derived from her appearance, which he assured us were conclusive on this subject; but to these I gave little heed. I did not stop to listen. I hurried to the chamber, closed the door, and was alone with my victim, with my wife!

My victim! —my wife!

* The reader will be reminded of the melancholy details in the case of Miss Landon — L. E. L. — whose fate is still a mystery.

I stood above her inanimate form. How lovely in death—but, oh! how cold! I looked upon her pale, transparent cheeks and forehead, through which the blue lines of veins, that were pulseless now, gleamed out, showing the former avenues of the sweet and blessed life. I was disarmed of my anger while I gazed. I bent down beside her, took the rigid fingers of her hand in mine, and pressed my lips upon the bloodless but still beautiful forms of hers.

I remembered her youth and her beauty—the glowing promise of her mind, and the gentle temper of her heart. I remembered the dear hours of our first communion—how pure were our delights—how perfect my felicity. How we moved together as with one being only—beside the broad streams of our birthplace—under the shelter of shady pines—morning, and noon, and in the star-lighted night—never once dreaming that an hour like this would come!

And she seemed so perfect pure, as she was so perfect lovely! Never did I hear from her lips sentiment that was not—not only virtuous, but delicate and soft—not only innocent but true—not only true but fond! Alas! so to fall—so to yield herself at last! To feel the growth of rank passions—to surrender her pure soul and perfect form to the base uses of lust—to be no better than the silly harlot, that, beguiled by her eager vanity, surrenders the precious jewel in her trust, to the first cunning sharper that assails her with a smiling lie!

Oh God! how these convictions shook my frame! I had no longer strength for thought or action. I was feebler than the child, who, lost in the wood, struggles and sinks at last, through sheer exhaustion, into sobbing slumber at the foot of the unfeeling tree. I did not sob. I had no tears. But at intervals, the powers of breathing became choked, and my struggles for relief were expressed in a groan which I vainly endeavored to keep down. The sense of desolation was upon me much more strongly than that of either crime or death. I did not so much feel that she was guilty, as that I was alone! That, henceforth, I must for ever be alone. This was the terrible conviction;—and oh! how lone! To lessen its pangs, I strove to recall the fault for which she perished—to renew the recollection of those thousand small events, which, thrown together, had seemed to

me mountains of rank and reeking evidence against her. But even my memory failed me in this effort. All this was a blank. The few imperfect and shadowy facts which I could recall seemed to me wholly unimportant in establishing the truth of what I sought to believe; and I shuddered with the horrible doubt that she might be innocent! If she were indeed innocent, what am I!

With the desperate earnestness of the cast-away, who strives, in mid-ocean, for the only plank which can possibly retard his doom, did I toil to re-establish in my mind that conviction of her guilt which the demon in my soul had made so certain by his assurances before. Alas! I had not only lost the wife of my bosom, but its fiend also. Vainly now did I seek to summon him back. Vainly did I call upon him to renew his arguments and proofs! He had fled—fled for ever; and I could fancy that I heard him afar off, chuckling, with hellish laughter, over the triumphant results of his malice.

I know not how long I hung over that silent speaker. Her pale, placid countenance—her bloodless lips, that still seemed to smile upon me as they had ever done before;—and that eye of speaking beauty—only half closed—oh! what conclusive assurances did they seem to give of that innocence which it now seemed the worst impiety to doubt! I would have given worlds—alas! how impotent is such a speech! Death sets his seal upon hope, and love, and endeavor; and the regrets of that childish precipitation which has obeyed the laws of passion only, are only so many mocking memorials of the blind heart, that jaundiced the face of truth, and distorted all the aspects of the beautiful.

Once more I laughed—a vain hysterical laugh—the expression of my conviction that I was self-doomed and desperate; and, writhing beside the inanimate angel whom I then would have recalled, though with all her guilt—assuming all of it to have been true—to the arms that wantonly cast her off for ever—I grasped the cold senseless limbs in my embrace, and placed the drooping head once more upon the bosom where it could not long remain! What a weight! The pulsation in my own heart ceased, and, with a shudder, I released the chilling form from my grasp, and found strength barely to compose the limbs once more in the bed beside me.

I pass over the usual and unnecessary details. There was a show of inquiry of course; but the one word of the learned young gentleman in black silenced any further examination. It was shown to the inquest by Mrs. Porterfield that my wife had been sick—that she was suddenly found dead. The physician furnished the next necessary fact. I was not examined at all. I stood by in silence. I heard the verdict—"Death by apoplexy"—with a smile. I was not unwilling to state the truth. Had I been called upon I should have done so. At first I was about to proffer my testimony, but a single sentence from the lips of Kingsley, when I declared to him my purpose, silenced me:—

"If you are not afraid to declare your own act, you should at least scruple to denounce her shame! She died your wife. Let that seal your tongue. The shame would be shared between you! You could only justify your crime by exposing hers!"

With the stern strength of desperation I stood above the grave, and heard the heavy clod ring hollowly upon the coffin. And there closed two lives in one. My hopes were buried there as effectually as her unconscious form.

Life is not breath simply. Not the capacity to move, and breathe, to act, eat, drink, sleep, and say, "Thank God! we have ate, drank, and slept!" The life of humanity consists in hope, love, and labor. In the capacity to desire, to affect, and to struggle. I had now nothing for which I could hope, nothing to love, nothing to struggle for!

Yes! life has something more:—endurance! This is a part of the allotment. The conviction of this renewed my strength. But it was the strength of desolation! I had taken courage from despair!

CHAPTER LIII.

REVELATION—THE LETTER OF JULIA.

It must be remembered, that, in all this time—amidst all my agonies—my feelings of destitution and despair—I had few or no doubts of the guilt of Julia Clifford. My sufferings arose from the love which I had felt—the defeat of my hopes and fortune—the long struggle of conflicting feelings, mortified pride, and disappointed enjoyment. Excited by the melancholy spectacle before me—beholding the form of her, once so beautiful—still so beautiful—whom I had loved with such an absorbing passion—whom I could not cease to love—suddenly cut off from life—her voice, which was so musical, suddenly hushed for ever—the tides of her heart suddenly stopped—and all the sweet waters of hope dried up in her bosom, and turned into bitterness and blight in mine—the force of my feelings got the better of my reason, and cruel and oppressive doubts of the justness of her doom overpowered my soul. But, with the subsiding of my emotions, under the stern feeling of resolve which came to my relief, and which my course of education enabled me to maintain, my persuasions of her guilt were resumed, and I naturally recurred to the conclusions which had originally justified me to myself, in inflicting the awful punishment of death upon her. But I was soon to be deprived of this justification—to be subjected to the terrible recoil of all my feelings of justice, love, honor and manliness, in the new and overwhelming conviction, not only that I had been premature, but that she was innocent!—innocent, equally of thought and deed, which could incur the reproach of impurity, or the punishment of guilt.

Three days had elapsed after her burial, when I re-opened and re-appeared in my office. I did not re-open it with any intention to resume my business. That was impossible in a place, where, at every movement, the grave of my victim rose, always green, in my sight. My purpose was to put my papers in order, transfer them to other parties, dispose of my effects, and depart with Kingsley to the new countries, of which he had succeeded in impressing upon me some of his own opinions. Not that these furnished for me any attractions. I was not persuaded by any customary arguments held out to the ambitious and the enterprising. It was a matter of small moment to me where I went, so that I left the present scene of my misery and overthrow. In determining to accompany him to Texas, no part of my resolve was influenced by the richness of its soil, or the greatness of its probable destinies. These, though important in the eyes of my friend, were as nothing in mine. In taking that route my object was simply, *to go with him.* He had sympathized with me, after a rough fashion of his own, the sincerity of which was more dear to me than the roughness was repulsive. He had witnessed my cares—he knew my guilt and my griefs—this knowledge endeared him to me more strongly than ever, and made him now more necessary to my affections than any other living object.

I re-opened my office and resumed my customary seat at the table. But I sat only to ruminate upon things and thoughts which, following the track of memory, diverted my sight as well as my mind, from all present objects. I saw nothing before me, except vaguely, and in a sort of shadow. I had a hazy outline of books against the wall; and a glimmering show of papers and bundles upon the table. I sat thus for some time, lost in painful and humiliating revery. Suddenly I caught a glimpse of a packet on the table, which I did not recollect to have seen before. It bore my name. I shuddered to behold it, for it was in the handwriting of my wife. This, then, was the writing upon which she had been secretly engaged, for so many days, and of which Mrs. Porterfield had given me the first intimation. I remembered the words of Julia when she assured me that it was intended for me—when she playfully challenged my curiosity, and implored me to acknowledge an anxiety to know the

contents. The pleading tenderness of her speech and manner now rose vividly to my recollection. It touched me more now — now that the irrevocable step had been taken — far more than it ever could have affected me then. Then, indeed, I remained unaffected save by the caprice of my evil genius. The demon of the blind heart was then uppermost. In vain now did I summon him to my relief. Where was he? Why did he not come?

I took up the packet with trembling fingers. My nerves almost failed me. My heart shrank and sank with painful presentiments. What could this writing mean? Of what had Julia Clifford to write? Her whole world's experience was contained, and acquired, in my household. The only portion of this experience which she might suppose unknown to me was her intercourse with Edgerton. The conclusion then was natural that this writing related to this matter; but, if natural, why had I not conjectured it before? Why, when I first heard of it, had the conclusion not forced itself upon me as directly as it did now? Alas! it was clear to me now that I was then blind; and with this clearness of sight my doubts increased; but they were doubts of myself, rather than doubts of her.

It required an effort before I could recover myself sufficiently to break the seal of the packet. First, however, I rose and reclosed the office. Whatever might be the contents of the paper, to me it was the language of a voice from the grave. It contained the last words of one I never more should hear. The words of one whom I had loved as I could never love again. It was due to her, and to my own heart, that she should be heard in secret; — that her words — whether in reproach or repentance — whether in love or scorn — should fall upon mine ear without witness, in a silence as solemn as was that desolate feeling which now sat, like a spectre, brooding among the ruins of my heart.

My pulses almost ceased to beat — my respiration was impeded — my eyes swam — my senses reeled in dismay and confusion — as I read the following epistle. Too late! too late! Blind, blind heart! And still I was not mad! — No! no! — that would have been a mercy which I did not merit! — that would have been forgetfulness — utter oblivion of the wo which I can never cease to feel.

THE LAST LETTER OF JULIA.

"HUSBAND, DEAR HUSBAND!

"I write to you in fear and trembling. I have striven to speak to you, more than once, but my tongue and strength have failed me. What I have to tell you is so strange and offensive, and will be to you so startling, that you will find it hard to believe me; and yet, dear husband, there is not a syllable of it which is not true! If I knew that I were to die to-morrow I could with perfect safety and confidence make the same confession which I make now. But I do not wish you to take what I say on trust; look into the matter yourself—not precipitately—above all, not angrily—and you will see that I say nothing here which the circumstances will not prove. Indeed, my wonder is that so much of it has remained unknown to you already.

"Husband, Mr. Edgerton deceives you—he has all along deceived you—he is neither your friend nor mine. I would call him rather the most dangerous enemy; for he comes by stealth, and abuses confidence, and, like the snake in the fable, seeks to sting the very hand that has warmed him. I know how much this will startle you, for I know how much you think of him, and love him, and how many are the obligations which you owe to his father. But hear me to the end, and you will be convinced, as I have been, that, so far from your seeking his society and permitting his intimacy in our household, you would be justified in the adoption of very harsh measures for his expulsion—at least, it would become your duty to inform him that you can no longer suffer his visits.

"To begin, then, dear husband, Mr. Edgerton has been bold enough to speak to me in such language, as was insulting in him to utter, and equally painful and humiliating for me to hear. He has done this, not once, nor twice, nor thrice, but many times. You will ask why I have not informed you of this before; but I had several reasons for forbearing to do so, which I will relate in the proper places. I fancied that I could effectually repel insult of this sort without making you a party to it, for I feared the violence of your temper, and dreaded that the consequences might be bloodshed. I am only prompted to take

a different course now, as I find that I was mistaken in this impression — and perceive that there is no hope of a remedy against the impertinence but by appealing to you for protection.

"It was not long after our marriage before the attentions of Mr. Edgerton became so particular as to annoy me; and I consulted my mother on the subject, but she assured me that such were customary, and so long as you were satisfied I had no reason to be otherwise. I was not quite content with this assurance, but did not know what other course to take, and there was nothing in the conduct of Mr. Edgerton so very marked and offensive as to justify me in making any communication to you. What offended me in his bearing was his fixed and continued watchfulness — the great earnestness of his looks — the subdued tones of his voice when he spoke to me, almost falling to a whisper, and the unusual style of his language, which seemed to address itself to such feelings only as do not belong to the common topics of discourse. The frequency of his visits to the studio afforded him opportunities for indulging in these practices; and your strange indifference to his approaches, and your equally strange and most unkind abandonment of my society for that of others, increased these opportunities, of which he scrupled not to take constant advantage. I soon perceived that he sought the house only at the periods when you were absent. He seemed always to know when this was the case; and I noted the fact, particularly, that, if, on such occasions, you happened to arrive unexpectedly, he never remained long afterward, but took his departure with an abruptness that, it seemed wonderful to me you should not have perceived. Conduct so strange as this annoyed rather than alarmed me; and it made me feel wretched, perhaps, beyond any necessity for it, when I found myself delivered up, as it were, to such persecution, by the very person whose duty it was to preserve me, and whose own presence, which would have been an effectual protection, was so dear to me always. Do not suppose, dear Edward, that I mean to reproach you. I do not know what may have been your duties abroad, and the trials which drew you so much from home, and from the eyes of a wife who knows no dearer object of contemplation than the form of her husband. Men in business, I know, have a thousand troubles out of doors,

which a generous sensibility makes them studious never to bring home with them; and, knowing this, I determined to think lovingly of you always—to believe anything rather than that you would willingly neglect me;—and, by the careful exercise of my thoughts and affections, as they should properly be exercised, so to protect my own dignity and your honor, as to spare you any trouble or risk in asserting them, and, at the same time, to save both from reproach.

"But, though I think I maintained the most rigid reserve, as well of looks as of language, this unhappy young man continued his persecutions. In order to avoid him, I abandoned my usual labors in the studio. From the moment when I saw that he was disposed to abuse the privileges of friendship, I yielded that apartment entirely to him, and invariably declined seeing him when he visited the house in the mornings. But I could not do this at evening; and this became finally a most severe trial, for it so happened, that you now adopted a habit which left him entirely unrestrained, unless in the manner of his reception by myself. You now seldom remained at home of an evening, and thus deprived me of that natural protector whose presence would have spared me much pain with which I will not distress you. Ah! dearest husband, why did you leave me on such occasions? Why did you abandon me to the two-fold affliction of combating the approaches of impertinence, at the very moment when I was suffering from the dreadful apprehension that I no longer possessed those charms which had won me the affections of a husband. Forgive me! My purpose is not to reproach, but to entreat you.

"I need not pass over the long period through which this persecution continued. Your indifference seemed to me to give stimulus to the perseverance of this young man. Numberless little circumstances combined to make me think that, from this cause, indeed, he drew something like encouragement for his audacious hopes. The strength of your friendship for him blinded you to attentions which, it seemed to me, every eye must have seen but yours. I grew more and more alarmed; and a second time consulted with my mother. Her written answer you will find, marked No. 1, with the rest of the enclosures in this envelope. She laughed at my apprehensions, in

sisted that Mr. Edgerton had not transcended the customary privileges, and intimated, very plainly as you will see, that a wife can suffer nothing from the admiration of a person, not her husband, however undisguised this admiration may be — provided she herself shows none in return ;— an opinion with which I could not concur, for the conclusive reason that, whatever the world may think on such a subject, the object of admiration, if she has any true sensibilities, must herself suffer annoyance, as I did, from the special designation which attends such peculiar and marked attention as that to which I was subjected. My mother took much pains, verbally and in writing, as the within letters will show you, to relieve me from the feeling of disquiet under which I suffered, but without effect; and I was further painfully afflicted by the impression, which her general tone of thought forced upon me, that her sense of propriety was so loose and uncertain that I could place no future reliance upon her counsels in relation to this or any kindred subject. Ah, Edward ! little can you guess how lonely and desolate I felt, when, unable any longer to refer to her, I still did not dare to look to you.

" One opinion of hers, however, had very much alarmed me. You will find it expressed in the letter marked No. 3, in this collection. When I complained to her of the approaches of Mr. Edgerton, and declared my purpose of appealing to you if they were continued, she earnestly and expressly exhorted me against any such proceeding. She assured me that such a step would only lead to violence and bloodshed — reminded me of your sudden anger — your previous duel — and insisted that nothing more was necessary to check the impertinence than my own firmness and dignity. Perhaps this would have been enough, were it always practicable to maintain the reserve and coldness which was proper to effect this object, and, indeed, I could not but perceive that the effect was produced in considerable degree by this course. Mr. Edgerton visited the house less frequently ; grew less impressive in his manner, and much more humble, until that painful and humiliating night of my mother's marriage. That night he asked me to dance with him. I declined ; but afterward he came to me accompanied by my mother. She whispered in my ears that I

was harsh in my refusal, and called my attention to his wretched appearance. Had I reflected upon it then, as I did afterward, this very allusion would have been sufficient to have determined me not to consent;—but I was led away by her suggestions of pity, and stood up with him for a cotillion. But the music changed, the set was altered, and the Spanish dance was substituted in its place. In the course of this dance, I could not deceive myself as to the degree of presumption which my partner displayed; and, but for the appearance of the thing, and because I did not wish to throw the room into disorder, I would have stopped and taken my seat long before it was over. When I did take my seat, I found myself still attended by him, and it was with difficulty that I succeeded finally in defeating his perseverance, by throwing myself into the midst of a set of elderly ladies, where he could no longer distinguish me with his attentions. In the meantime you had left the room. You had deserted me. Ah! Clifford, to what annoyance did your absence expose me that night! To that absence, do we owe that I lost the only dear pledge of love that God had ever vouchsafed us—and you know how greatly my own life was perilled. Think not, dearest, that I speak this to reproach you; and yet—could you have remained!—could you have loved, and longed to be and remain with me, as most surely did I long for your presence only and always—ah! how much sweeter had been our joys—how more pure our happiness—our faith—with now—perhaps, even now—the dear angel whom we then lost, living and smiling beneath our eyes, and linking our mutual hearts more and more firmly together than before!

"That night, when it became impossible to remain longer without trespassing—when all the other guests had gone—I consented to be taken home in Mr. Edgerton's carriage. Had I dreamed that Mr. Edgerton was to have been my companion, I should have remained all night before I would have gone with him, knowing what I knew, and feeling the mortification which I felt. But my mother assured me that I was to have the carriage to myself—it was she who had procured it;—and it was not until I was seated, and beheld him enter, that I had the least apprehension of such an intrusion. Edward! it is with a feeling almost amounting to horror, that I am constrained to

think that my mother not only knew of his intention to accompany me, but that she herself suggested it. This, I say to *you!* You will find the reasons for my suspicions in the letters which I enclose. It is a dreadful suspicion — at the expense of one's own mother! I dare not believe in the dark malice which it implies. — I strive to think that she meant and fancied only some pleasant mischief.

"I shudder to declare the rest! This man, your friend — he whom you sheltered in your bosom, and trusted beyond all others — whom you have now taken into your house with a blindness that looks more like a delusion of witchcraft than of friendship — this impious man, I say, dared to wrap me in his embrace — dared to press his lips upon mine!

"My cheek even now burns as I write, and I must lay down the pen because of my trembling I struggled from his grasp — I broke the window by my side, and cried for help from the wayfarers. I cried for you! But you did not answer! Oh, husband! where were you? Why, why did you expose me to such indignities?

"He was alarmed. He promised me forbearance; and, convulsed with fright and fear, I found myself within our enclosure. I knew not how; but before I reached the cottage I became insensible, and knew nothing more until the pangs of labor subdued the more lasting pains of thought and recollection.

"You resolved to leave our home — to go abroad among strangers, and Oh! how I rejoiced at your resolution. It seemed to promise me happiness; at least it promised me rescue and relief. I should at all events be free from the persecution of this man. I dreaded the consequences, either to you or to himself, of the exposure of his insolence. I had resolved on making it; and only hesitated, day by day, as my mother dwelt upon the dangers which would follow. And when you determined on removal, it seemed to me the most fortunate providence, as it promised to spare me the necessity of making this painful revelation at all. Surely, I thought, and my mother said, as this will put an effectual stop to his presumption, there will be no need to narrate what is already past. The only motive in telling it at all would be to prevent, not to punish: if the prevention is effected by other means, it is charity only to

forbear the relation of matters which would breed hatred, and probably provoke strife. This made me silent; and, full of new hope—the hope that having discarded all your old associates and removed from all your old haunts, you would become mine entirely—I felt a new strength in my frame, a new life in my breast, and a glow upon my cheeks as within my soul, which seemed a guaranty for a long and happy term of that love which had begun in my bosom with the first moments of its childish consciousness and confidence.

"But one painful scene and hour I was yet compelled to endure the night before our departure. Mr. Edgerton came to play his flute under our window. I say Mr. Edgerton, but it was only by a sort of instinct that I fixed upon him as the musician. Perhaps it was because I knew not what other person to suspect. Frequently, before this night, had I heard the music; but on this occasion he seemed to have approached more nearly to the dwelling; and, indeed, I finally discovered that he was actually beneath the China-tree that stood on the south front of the cottage. I was asleep when the music began. He must have been playing for some time before I awakened. How I was awakened I know not; but something disturbed me, and I then saw you about to leave the room stealthily. I heard your feet upon the stairs, and in the next moment I discovered one of your pistols lying upon the window-sill, just beneath my eyes. This alarmed me; a thousand apprehensions rushed into my brain; all the suggestions of strife and bloodshed which my mother had ever told me, filled my mind; and without knowing exactly what I did or said, I called out to the musician to fly with all possible speed. He did so; and after a delay which was to me one of the most cruel apprehension, you returned in safety. Whether you suspected, and what, I could not conjecture; but if you had any suspicions of me, you did not seem to entertain any of him, for you spoke of him afterward with the same warm tone of friendship as before.

"That something in my conduct had not pleased you, I could see from your deportment as we travelled the next morning. You were sad, and very silent and abstracted. This disappeared, however, and, day by day, my happiness, my hope, my confidence in you, in myself, in all things, increased—and I

felt assured of realizing that perfect idea of felicity which I proposed to myself from the moment when you declared your purpose to emigrate. Were we not happy, husband — so happy at M——, for weeks, for months — always, morning, noon, and night — until the reappearance of this false friend of yours? Then, it seemed to me as if everything changed. Then, that other friend of yours — who, though he never treated me with aught but respect, I yet can call no friend of mine — Mr. Kingsley, drew you away again from your home — carried you with him to his haunts — detained you late and long, by night and day — and I was left once more exposed to the free and frequent familiarity of Mr. Edgerton. He renewed his former habits; his looks were more presuming, and his attentions more direct and loathsome than ever. More than once I strove to speak with you on this hateful subject; but it was so shocking, and you were so fond of him, and I still had my fears! At length, moved by compassion, you brought him to our house. Blind and devoted to him — with a blindness and devotion beyond that which the noblest friendship would deserve, but which renders tenfold more hateful the dishonest and treacherous person upon whom it is thrown away — you command me to meet him with kindness — to tend his bed of sickness — to soothe his moments of sadness and despondency — to expose myself to his insolence!

'Husband! my soul revolts at this charge! I have disobeyed it and you; and I must justify myself in this my disobedience. I must at length declare the truth. I have striven to do so in the preceding narrative. This narrative I began when you brought this false friend into our dwelling. He must leave it. You must command his departure. Do not think me moved by any unhappy or unbecoming prejudices against him. My antipathies have arisen solely from his presumption and misconduct. I esteemed him — nay, I even liked him — before I liked his taste for the arts, his amiable manners, his love of music and poetry, and all those graces of the superior mind and education, which dignify humanity, and indicate its probable destinies. But when he showed me how false he was to a friendship so free and confiding as was yours — when he abused my eyes and ears with expressions unbecoming in him, and in-

sulting and ungenerous to me—I loathed and spurned him While he is in your house I will strive and treat him civilly, but do not tax me further. For your sake I have borne much; for the sake of peace, and to avoid strife and crime, I have been silent—perhaps too long. The strange, improper letters of my mother, which I enclose, almost make me tremble to think that I have paid but too much deference to her opinion. But, in the expulsion of this miserable man from your dwelling, there needs no violence, there needs no crime! A word will overwhelm him with shame. Remember, dear husband, that he is feeble and sick; it is probable he has not long to live. Perform your painful duty privily, and with all the forbearance which is consistent with a proper firmness. In truth, he has done us no real harm. Let us remember *that!* If anything, he has only made me love you the more, by showing so strongly how generous is the nature which he has so infamously abused. Once more, dear husband, do no violence. Let not our future days be embittered by any recollections of the present. Command, compel his departure, and come home to me, and keep with me always. "Your own true wife,

"JULIA CLIFFORD."

"*Postcript.*—I had closed this letter yesterday, thinking to send it to your office in the afternoon. I had hoped that there would be nothing more;—but last night, this madman—for such I must believe him to be—committed another outrage upon my person! He has a second time seized me in his arms and endeavored to grasp me in his embrace. O husband!—why, why do you thus expose me? Do you indeed love me? I sometimes tremble with a fear lest you do not. But I dare not think so. Yet, if you do, why am I thus exposed—thus deserted—thus left to a companionship which is equally loathsome to me and dishonoring to you? I implore you to open your eyes—to believe me, and discard this false friend from your dwelling and your confidence. But, oh, be merciful, dear husband! Strike no sudden blow! Send him forth with scorn but remember his feebleness, his family, and spare his life. I send this by Emma. Let no one see the letters of my mother but burn them instantly. "Your own "JULIA."

And this was the writing which had employed her time for days before the sad catastrophe! And it was for this reason that she asked, with so much earnestness, if I had been to my office on the day when I drove Edgerton out into the woods for the adjustment of our issue? No wonder that she was anxious at that moment. How much depended upon that simple and ordinary proceeding. Had I but gone that day to my office as usual! .....

There were no longer doubts. There could be none. There was now no mystery. It was all clear. The most ambiguous portions of her conduct had been as easily and simply explained the rest. But it availed nothing! The blow had fallen. I was an accursed man — truly accursed, and miserably desolate.

I still sat, stolid, seemingly, as the insensible chair which sustained me, when Kingsley came in. He took the papers from my unresisting hands. He read them in silence. I heard but one sentence from his lips, and it came from them unconsciously:—

"Poor, poor girl!"

I looked round and started to my feet. The tears were on his manly cheeks. I reached none. My eyes were dry! The fountains of tears seemed shut up, arid and thirsty.

"I must make atonement!" I exclaimed. "I must deliver myself up to justice!"

"This is madness," said he, seizing my arm as I was about to leave the room.

"No: retribution only! I have destroyed her. I must make the only atonement which is in my power. I must die!"

"What you design is none," he said solemnly. "Your death will atone nothing. It is by living only that you can atone!"

"How?"

"By repentance! This is the grand — the only sovereign atonement which the spirit of man can ever make. There is no other mode provided in nature. The laws, which would take your life, would deprive you of the means of atonement. This is due to God; it can be performed only by living and suffering. Life is a duty because it is an ordeal. You must

preserve life, as a sacred trust, for this reason. Even if you were a felon—one wilfully resolving and coldly executing crime—you were yet bound to preserve life! Throw it away, and though you comply with the demand of social laws, you forfeit the only chance of making atonement to those which are far superior. Rather pray that life may be spared you. It was with this merciful purpose that God not only permitted Cain to live, but commanded that none should slay him. You must live for this!"

"Yet I slew *her!*"

He did with me as he pleased. Three days after beheld us on our way to the rich empire of Texas—its plains, rich but barren—unstocked, wild—running to waste with its tangled weeds—needing, imploring the vigorous hand of cultivation. Even such, at that moment, was my heart! Rich in fertile affections, yet gone to waste; waiting, craving, praying for the hand of the cultivator!—Yet who now was that cultivator?

To this question the words of Kingsley, which were those of truth and wisdom, were a sufficient answer; and evermore an echo arose as from the bottom of my soul; and my lips repeated it to my own ears only; and but one word was spoken; and that word was—"ATONEMENT!"

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